

Thos. Moor L^e Chancelour



—Thomas More

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A PORTRAIT OF

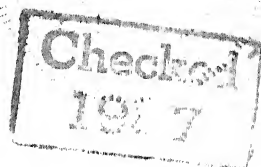
THOMAS MORE

SCHOLAR, STATESMAN, SAINT

by

ALGERNON CECIL

Author of "Metternich"



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PREFACE

SOME few years ago I ventured to publish the study of a man of the world. Metternich seemed in many respects peculiarly qualified to do full justice to the outlook upon human life which that description implies. He had great gifts and much charm of personality. He was born into that *beau monde* which at that time, more obviously than just at present, governs the world. He lived through a period of rapid and revolutionary change when elemental forces, both heroes and spirits, came, as Thomas Hardy has imagined in his "Dynasts," into full play. He met and mixed with the most powerful people of his time. He was pitted against and defeated one of the giants of all time. He had—and it was not the least of his achievements—Disraeli for his pupil. And within obvious limitations he may even be reckoned the epitome of an epoch. Some have seen in him the incarnation of political evil, others the opponent of all good. But he was, in fact, what I have called him, a man of the world, neither worse nor better; and no change of fashions is likely in the long run to affect the truth of certain things that he saw or certain conclusions that he came to.

Wide as is the ground that such a career as Metternich's seems to bestride, it is far from being the whole ground covered by human life, or possessed by human thought or touched by human emotion; and he would, I think, have been ready enough to recognise it. He dreamt, in fact, of a reconstruction of human society that he could not hope himself to effect; and in his later years he became a thoughtful student of St. Paul's Epistles. A mystical world to which he had found the key, but of which the door never for him turned upon its hinges, lay, as in some tale of Mr. De La Mare's, just beyond his reach.

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Of an inhabitant of that other world this book is a study. Here, too, was a man to a rare degree in touch with great men and with great affairs. Here was a scholar eminent even among a circle of pre-eminent scholars; a writer who has left his mark on English prose; a talker of great charm; a notable wit according to the still unsophisticated fashion of his time; a skilled diplomatist; a subtle theologian; a lawyer at the very summit of his profession; a Speaker of the House of Commons; a Lord Chancellor in times when that office was even more distinguished than it is now; and, last but not least, a statesman who could take his line and stand his ground against the most masterful of English kings. More was all this, and something still besides. Capable of such contacts as have been shown in one sphere, he was capable of contacts not less assured in another, and he might be said to walk the tight-ropes of both worlds like some finished master of balance. So just, indeed, was his poise that men as different from himself and from one another as Dean Swift and Lord Chancellor Campbell declared with very similar emphasis that "his character"—to quote Campbell's language—came "as near to perfection as our nature will permit."

It must be a quarter of a century ago that, wishing to know more of so remarkable an Englishman, I bought his English works in the original sixteenth-century edition. From these memorials I vaguely fancied I might learn how the supreme common sense and large, tolerant humour of the English character could be blended with such a Greek sense of proportion, Latin precision of thought and Hebrew profundity of mystical vision, as to produce a pattern of life and mind both assimilating the broad features of human experience and satisfying the essential demands of truth and sanity amidst the growing intellectual, moral and political disorder of our present civilisation.

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Others, meanwhile, have been pointing out the rare importance of More's intellectual position. The late Mr. Chesterton's remark is quoted in the first chapter of this book. Professor Chambers has gone even further, and assured us¹ that, unless More's principles triumph, the civilisation of Europe is doomed. I make no apology then for adding this book to those already existing, and with the more confidence that I cannot quite satisfy myself that More's life and mind have even yet been fully appropriated to our uses. In the case of a nature so finely integrated as his and so little patient of any eclectic treatment, there seems room for something further in the way of detailed analysis,² commentary and criticism of his works, and perhaps too, for some closer interweaving of his inner with his outer life, if his figure is to stand out in its full distinction upon the large tapestry of his time. If his specific virtue lies, as Professor Chambers tells us, in a "certain attitude of mind," we must not, I think, expect that the mind will maintain its attitude any better than the body without some subtle energy of spiritual life behind it. Let that be wanting, and the utmost technical skill will not give us a speaking likeness. "Your fathers slew the prophets and ye have builded their sepulchres." That is the reproach which as a nation we seem to be in some danger of incurring. We have to see More not merely as a man of his time, but of all time, and to hang his portrait not only in his local, but in our eternal habitations. Can this be done until we have cleared our thought on larger issues?

Here, however, I fear a mistake. It happens that I have long been satisfied, not only that in the crisis of the Reforma-

¹ Thomas More, "Prologue," p. 15.

² Gairdner's abstract of the Dialogue concerning Tyndale which will be found in his "Lollardy and the Reformation," I, pp. 543-578, and W. E. Campbell's essay on the spirit and doctrine of that Dialogue (published in the new edition of More's English Works), require mention in this connection.

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tion More and Erasmus were right and Luther and Calvin mistaken, but that no half-way houses between their respective positions, such as men have tried to inhabit both in their age and subsequently, are on any large view of history better than lodgings for the night. In other words, had I lived in his time and had the requisite courage been mine, I should have wished to take my stand at More's side; and so, I feel confident, would it have been with many in whom time and chance and circumstance have aroused other loyalties and alien affections. Yet I am too closely in sympathy with what I conceive to be the essence of Humanism and too distrustful of any conclusions that do not postulate much travail of mind and spirit to have any desire to engage in what goes by the much-abused name of propaganda. All attitudes of mind must, I suppose, so soon as expression is given to them, lie open in some sense to that charge, but, I cannot say too emphatically that, although I have often in the course of this study to deal with highly controversial matter, my object is not to plead a case, but to put a point of view. No eye but my own passed over these pages¹ before they were delivered into the publisher's hands; and subsequent criticism has been rather detailed than structural. The book may need, of course, the more correction for this—from historians, lawyers, men of letters, philosophers, scientists, theologians, from all in whose fields I have trodden or trespassed—but, "poor thing" as it may appear, it is emphatically "mine own."

Do I need to add that, if in attempting to paint, as well as I am able, a portrait of Thomas More with its delicate features and deep parallel lines of action and reflection I should seem to any whose sympathies I cannot hope to engage

¹ I must, however, except from this statement the appendix to Chapter IV, which in substance was submitted to a friend's eye before completion; whilst the strictest accuracy would require mention also of the typist.

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to have been guilty of discourtesy, they have my apologies beforehand—apologies which cannot do better than echo More's wish, addressed to his judges, that we who have differed thus on earth may yet enjoy a merry meeting in heaven? I think in respect of some of them at least that I can claim to understand their feelings; certainly I have no excuse for not doing so. The blood of Eldon as well as of Burghley runs in my veins—not to speak of far deeper affinities and affections. But in truth so small is my controversial purpose that, if the inscription had not seemed too pretentious, I should have dedicated this book, first to my *friends* of every denomination or of none; then, to those who are sometimes in this country called, if only in reproach, by the honourable name of "*Romans*"; and last, but not least, to my *countrymen* in general. For to that unity of religious faith which has become so desperately necessary to us as the political and moral disintegration of our society advances, we shall, so far as the human eye can see, come only, if we come at all, through the courtesy of many individual minds seeking one another, no longer across the strong barriers which use and wont have raised, but at the very fork of the road where their intellectual forbears parted.

Though, as I have already implied, I am entirely responsible for all that follows, I owe a debt of thanks to certain friends and acquaintances—to the Marchesa Origo, who, rich in international associations and yet richer in humane and humanist sympathies, has been so kind as to read in proof some of the earlier chapters—and to my especial satisfaction that on Pico della Mirandola; to Mr. Richard O'Sullivan, K.C., the Secretary of the More Society, who was so good as to make several valuable suggestions as well as to lend me some very useful books; and to my old New College contemporaries, the Rt. Hon. H. T. Baker and Prof. H. E. Butler, with whom circumstances gave me the opportunity

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of discussing one of the more difficult problems upon which I had to make up my mind. To Professor Chambers, who, incidentally, was kind enough to answer a question that I wished to put to him, my debt is, of course, very great—but there I am speaking for all More's admirers and followers.

My thanks are also due to the Hon. Mrs. A. J. L. Pollen and the Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., Master of Campion Hall, for permission to reproduce the altarpiece of the Urquhart Chapel, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and dedicated to SS. John Fisher and Thomas More; to the Trustees of the British Museum for the illustrations of Pico della Mirandola, Machiavelli, and Cardinal Wolsey; and to the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum for the portraits of Erasmus, Katharine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII, and Thomas Cromwell. The portrait of Thomas More which appears as the frontispiece has been reproduced from the Holbein drawing in Windsor Castle by permission of His Majesty the King.

A. C.

December, 1936.

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A PORTRAIT OF THOMAS MORE

SCHOLAR, STATESMAN, SAINT

"Nec enim arbitror levioris esse operae Morum effingere quam Alexandrum magnum aut Achillem, nec illi quam hic noster immortalitate digniores erant."¹—ERASMUS.

¹ "For I do not think it a lighter task to paint More's likeness than those of Alexander the Great or Achilles, nor were they more worthy of immortality than this man of ours."

"MORUS"

THE life of Thomas More, retaining as it does a certain rare, not to say unique, distinction which the passage of centuries has been without power to wither or the custom of authors to stale, is one of the enduring possessions of the English people. At once an Englishman and a Catholic in some of the last days before the conjunction of those terms had come to seem evidence either of moral obliquity or mental gymnastic, More, as the occupant of the principal secular office in the state after that of the sovereign and actually the keeper in its legal aspect of the royal conscience at a time when that conscience became engaged in making English constitutional history to a phenomenal extent, could hardly have passed out of public recollection. Yet, if it is this fact that draws the historian's eye, it is not this fact that rivets the common vision. The pomp and peril of the period exceed in glamour any other, at least if the Civil War be excepted, in our island-story: the figure of the King surpasses—not, to anticipate some waggish interjection, in girth alone—that of any other English sovereign: and yet does Thomas More seem to tower above his time and his contemporaries much as a great actor will outshine the finest staging and the ablest cast. A noble and gracious human being, endowed with parts so perfect that Colet and Erasmus took him to be the only real genius among his countrymen, and with a character so endearing that the misanthropic Swift two hundred years after could still hail him as "the person of the greatest virtue this

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Kingdom ever produced,"¹ had in fact fallen for the term of his mortal life upon an age glowing with the charm of renescent culture, instinct with problems that torment us still, and alive with a dramatic sensibility preserved for us in the last of Shakespeare's historical plays.

All in this Englishman and everything about him thus marvellously combines to afford pleasure, to excite interest and to justify admiration. Framed by nature to covet earnestly the best gifts and led by grace to pursue a yet more excellent way, clothed with what the World can give in honour and crowned with what the Church can provoke in martyrdom, More has the means to capture the imagination of many kinds of men. The humanist and the theologian; the worshipper of heroes and the venerator of saints; the artist drawn by the distinction of a face and the student by that of a mind; such as would have all the world a stage, and such as would prefer it an academy; the drawers of water at the sweet springs of family relationship, and the hewers of wood for the temples of Clio; in brief the lovers alike of Man and of God—all these may find delight in the life of one whom Fortune raised from modest beginnings, and led along the precipice of great place, and brought down into the valley of decision, and lifted at length to the topmost crest of the world's flaming rampart, so that his memory lives for ever outlined against the fading sky of the old England of Chaucer and Langland like some giant statue seen in the foreground of a sinking sun.

Yet for no mere joy in the recalling of half-forgotten things does this tale, four centuries old, invite repeated telling, but because its consequence still grows and its interpretation still falls short of final meaning. "More," as Gilbert Chesterton observed in a paradox characteristically

¹ The statement occurs in Swift's "Concerning that universal hatred which prevails against the clergy."

profound, “is not quite so important as he will be in about a hundred years time. He may come to be counted the greatest Englishman or at least the greatest historical character in English history.”¹ Not Hobbes nor Hume in fact has dived so deep into the pools of political philosophy; not Burke nor Mill has kept so well abreast of the swift undercurrent of our time. That More’s praise should be found in the Church for which he fought and fell, that his championship of the cause of conscience should have won for him a place amidst the white-robed army of martyrs, and that “his stout and cheerful heart” should have caused his inclusion in the company of saints need cause us no surprise. But that in Moscow they should have been concerned to see his memorials imprinted² is evidence indeed that he had circumnavigated the world of thought and climbed in fancy the mountains of the moon.

The pursuit and apprehension of More’s mind thus possess more than with many other men the nature of a progressive science; the poetry of his legend, as the mist of time absorbs the dust of controversy, gains continually in beauty and significance; and the torch of his tradition which Roper’s hands first kindled and Harpsfield’s fingers tended to a fuller flame burns with yet brighter radiance as it is fed with new oil now from Stapleton’s sober chronicle, now from Cresacre More’s pious and reverent pages, is trimmed anew by the essays of Mackintosh and Campbell, raised for a moment upon Kenelm Digby’s altars, and fitted at last by the grave diligence of Bridgett and Professors Read and Chambers—not to speak of Miss Routh and Dr. Hitchcock and Mr. Hollis—to the

¹ G. K. Chesterton in “The Fame of Blessed Thomas More,” p. 63.

² The allusion is to the inquiry of the Director of the Marx-Engels Institute regarding the imprinting of the Lambeth MS. of the Harpsfield Life by the Sisters of the Convent de l’Adoration Réparatrice. (See R. W. Chambers’s article in “The Fame of Blessed Thomas More,” p. 27.)

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uses of a scholar's library. Here indeed is a burning and shining light which no Reformer's candle has been able to eclipse. Here is salt of wit and wisdom that has not lost its savour. And here, too, is such an old, plain English song of honour as "the spinners and the knitters in the sun and the free maids that weave their thread with bones"¹ might well grow used to chanting. For this is no fiction agreed upon, but simple truth and, if we choose to call it so, a sort of dallying with the innocence of heavenly love unto old age—a tale at the first gay and gracious, and at the last tragic and sublime.

¹ "Twelfth Night," Act II, sc. 4. The song, "Come away, come away, death," in that scene needs only a little poetic license and 'sublimation' to become curiously apposite to More's story. The Fool sings it in the play: More's Fool, given his views about More's attitude to the Oath, might well have sung it in fact.

II

SOME KINGS AND A CARDINAL

THE Roses which had so long lacerated England with their thorns had but a little while before stopped their warfare when, at a date long in doubt but now confidently ascertained to be the sixth of February, 1478,¹ Thomas More was born. There was then firmly seated upon the throne a sovereign of interest to us in the main for what he transmitted by way of heredity to his more famous grandson. Physically speaking the portrait of Edward IV which More drew in the opening pages of his "History of Richard III" might have been taken for a favourable description of Henry VIII. "A goodly personage," we read, "and very princely to behold . . . of visage lovely, of body mighty, strong and clean made, howbeit in his latter days with our over-liberal diet somewhat corpulent and boorly, and nathless not uncomely!" But the likeness reached beyond physical appearance. Of Edward IV one well qualified to speak has observed that he might have been a tyrant, but preferred to be a voluptuary.² Henry made use of similar dispositions with no such saving grace. He was both wanton and tyrannical, and the one trait in him so stimulated the other that the catholic tradition of his maternal grandfather—according to Prof. Pollard,³ "the most papally-minded of English Kings with the exception of Henry III"—seems lost in a riot of egotism. Pause then in passing

¹ See on this R. W. Chambers, "Thomas More," pp. 49 and 222.

² Oman, "Political History of England, 1377-1485," p. 469.

³ Pollard, "Wolsey," p. 167.

before More's portrait of King Edward's paramour, for of such as she is two generations later will a queen be made. Golden-haired Mistress Shore, with her white skin and grey eyes, her soft tongue and cherry-lip, inviting, in Shakespeare's rhyming vision, "one gentle kiss the more" and slipping down the Palace gutter to a beggar's ditch¹ below—what is she but the forerunner of the second of the fateful six whom Edward's grandson was to raise to the throne? Still alive in 1513, when More wrote his book, Jane Shore was even yet a topic of discussion; and there were those who disputed about her looks. More shows himself as curious in such matters as some of us, and as much resolved to set his mind at rest upon the point. Perhaps he managed to get a view of this notorious woman, now so fully fallen. At all events he satisfied himself that the once-golden girl had grown dusty, and was in point of fact no better than a withered old woman with "nothing left but shrivelled skin and hard bone." Not the lyrics of the poet, but the meditations of the moralist were now in place. If to some this tattered rag of humanity might seem "too slight a thing" to write of, it did not seem so to More. Not only the outward change of circumstance, but the deeper irony of changed relationships tempted his philosophic pen. "She beggeth," he noted kindly and sadly, "of many at this day living that at this day had begged, if she had not been." And beside the epigram he set down an aphorism not unworthy of the great dramatist who was in due time to draw from More's subject one of the finest of his plays: "Men use, if they have an evil turn, to write it in marble; and whoso doth us a good turn we write it in dust."

Finished as is the portraiture, "Shore's wife," clad in her penitential petticoat and carrying her candle, is no more

¹ This was the popular, though probably erroneous derivation of Shore-ditch.

than a ghost passing across the background of the stage in the vision which More has left us of the England of his boyhood. Richard, in body crooked and in mind a 'crook,' at once the nemesis of the long internecine quarrels of the Plantagenets and the genesis of the long, ruthless autocracy of the Tudors, moves by every right of drama, as well as of precedence, in the midst of the brief procession of his reign. More, it seems, could just remember the usurper's accession, or, rather, an incident, which supplied his father with a curious story. On the night of King Edward's death, a man of John More's acquaintance, Mystlebrook by name, had brought the news of it post haste to the house of one, Pottier, in Redcross Street outside the Cripplegate. Pottier was a servant of the Duke of Gloucester; and the reply that he returned, when apprised of the King's decease, seemed so singular that Mystlebrook passed it on to the elder More. "By my troth, man," Pottier had said, "then will my master, the Duke of Gloucester, be King." The obvious inference was of course that, even before his brother's death, Richard had resolved to seize the crown and that his confidential servants were well aware of it; and More, though only a child of five when he heard the speech repeated, evidently observed the effect of the report upon his father.¹

This little piece of homespun fitted excellently well into the large tapestry of the time; for in spite of the pardonable desire of new students to say new things, tradition, as so often happens, has stood the test of recent research. The little Princes, if the Tower dust bears true witness, perished in the reign and at the hands of their wicked uncle. Even in the days before Machiavel,² England had thus some claims to have brought forth a Borgia. But More's prose telling of the tale has long been drowned by Shakespeare's transcendental

¹ See on this Chambers, "Thomas More," p. 55.

² He was under fifteen at the date of Richard's usurpation.

music, even though his prose introduces a new manner in the writing of history—a style derived from the humility of the mystics and the cadences of the preachers; a style, plain and easy, yet ready to rise and fall with the nature of the theme.¹ If, however, we can forget Shakespeare, the narrative becomes full of pageantry and an underlying sense of supernatural things. Clarence drowning in his butt of malmsey; King Edward on his death-bed, swearing his wife's friends and foes to concord with fond futility; Queen Elizabeth taking sanctuary at Westminster with her hapless son; Gloucester and Buckingham supping so sweetly with the unsuspecting Rivers in the inn at Northampton and then packing him off to his death next day at Pomfret; Hastings, with his rejoicings over Rivers's execution hardly concluded, being hurried away to his own; Buckingham on a platform seeking with all the dexterity, high eloquence and prestige at his command to charm an unresponsive crowd of Londoners into a change of sovereigns; Richard, aloft in the gallery of Baynard's Castle—"a bishop," as Hall records, "on every hand of him"—toying so cunningly with the offer of the Crown; the ugly hunchback, as in some fairy-tale, supplanting the princely boy on the throne and at the Abbey; the Princes suffocating in the Tower at dead of night; the new King walking ever in terror, cased in a hidden coat of mail, his hand upon his dagger, his eye incontinently 'whirling' ² for fear of an assassin—can childhood reasonably demand a better series of thrills and shudders?

To hear such things spoken of by one's elders when one had but lately entered one's 'teens would have been exciting enough, but to live in daily contact with a man who had seen and shared in such events must have set the imagination racing.

¹ See on this R. W. Chambers, "Continuity of English Prose," pp. CXX—CXXX.

² "His eyes whirled about" (More's "History of King Richard III").

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And More, admitted in 1490, when his first schooling at St. Anthony's in Threadneedle Street under the admirable Holt¹ was over, to be a member of Morton's household, enjoyed this contact.

Morton was that Bishop of Ely from whom Richard had asked with calculated sweetness for Holborn-grown strawberries—sweetness calculated to provide the proper foil to the well-simulated outburst of rage that was to follow. An hour after, as if on a sudden discovery, Gloucester had bared his withered arm, charged Jane Shore with compassing his native deformity by magic spells, and concluded by turning upon her lover, Hastings, and telling him off as a traitor. Morton on that eventful morning, whilst Richard waited dinner until Hastings's head had been struck off on Tower Green outside, had been taken into custody together with other lords of the Council. Subsequently transferred to Buckingham's charge, he had played discreetly upon his keeper's shifting sympathies; for he was an old Lancastrian, and, as he whispered into Buckingham's attentive ear, had only submitted to the Yorkist cause after the Red Rose had first shed all its petals. Romance and loyalty had for him, as for others like him, their times and seasons. "I was never so mad," he told the Duke, "that I would with a dead man strive against the quick"; and it was from a statesmanlike regard for realities that, after honour had been satisfied, he had accepted the logic of the event, returned from the Continent, become King Edward IV's chaplain, and assisted, when the sands of the reign ran out, at his new master's death-bed. The wheel of fortune was, meanwhile, working round. The murder of Edward V, followed as it was by the tyranny of Richard III, gave Morton the chance of uniting his old loyalties with his new ones, dethroning the usurper and matching the heiress of York, Elizabeth Plantagenet, to Henry

¹ *i.e.* Nicholas Holt.

Tudor. He seized his occasion cleverly. The mine that blew up Richard on Bosworth Field was laid by Morton's hand; and Henry was satisfying, not only the instincts of a statesman, but also the debts of a deliverer by calling Morton to the first place in his counsels. The Dorsetshire boy, bred, if one tradition may be trusted, in a hamlet lying on that wild strip of country near Bere Regis which Thomas Hardy has immortalised under the name of Egdon Heath, thus became Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Chancellor, and ultimately, under a constitution which still remembered the Roman mission of Augustine and valued the mediæval idea of a corporate Christendom, Cardinal. This final distinction had, however, not yet fallen to him at the time when More became a member of his household.

By what play of circumstance the greatest Chancellor of one reign was thus constituted the patron of the best Chancellor of the next can be pretty nearly removed from the region of conjecture. The boundary of Sir John More's estate of Gobions¹ in Hertfordshire seems to have marched with that of Hatfield—not of course the Hatfield of the Cecils and the House, but the Bishop's Hatfield which centred in the old Palace and formed part of the appurtenances of the bishopric of Ely. Of that see, Morton, as we have seen, had been bishop; and More at the age of seven may well have been brought by his father to catch a glimpse of or get a blessing from so eminent a neighbour. Fortune, if tradition runs true, had from the first made him a boy of whom parents might be wisely as well as fondly proud. Portents had attended his childhood. His mother—one Agnes Granger, a Sheriff of London's daughter—is said to have dreamed that she saw cameos of all her children, but that his stood out, like

¹ Lady Gwendolen Cecil tells me that some years ago she was able to identify the site and trace the outline of Gobions in the middle of a wood now absorbed by the Brookman's Park building estate.

Joseph's towering sheaf, in higher relief than the rest. And again, his nurse, supposing herself to be in peril as she forded a stream, had tossed him from afar on to the bank and picked him up not a whit the worse and smiling. Morton, however, soon found more solid reasons than these dubious prodigies for declaring that the golden boy would make "a marvellous man." For More's wit was as lively as his spirits were good, and played about the world perpetually. They that were of the Archbishop's household marked in particular how, when Christmas came round, More would cut in among the players during the course of a performance and then by brilliant improvisations cut them out.

If More as a boy impressed Morton, it is as true to say that Morton as a man impressed More. The shrewd old ecclesiastical lawyer, with his long memory, his large understanding, his searching interrogatories, and his grave and graceful eloquence, struck the boy's fancy as he gazed out upon the chequered prospect of the world. Morton had, he could not but perceive, insight and experience—"a deep insight in politic, worldly drifts," a vast experience of the vicissitudes of fortune and the characters of men. And More listened and, as he listened, learned. The "History of Richard III," there can be little doubt, was largely based upon the Cardinal's conversation. The most dramatic touches are plainly drawn from this source. "The Protector"—so we can imagine Morton, with some slight change of phraseology to bridge the gap between our age and his, retailing the story of a crime—"the Protector complained as he came into the room that he had overslept himself, and then turning to me very pleasantly asked for some strawberries from my garden at Ely Place, at the same time complimenting me upon their excellence. I knew the man pretty well by this time and, noticing his peculiar civility, suspected that something was up. I was not mistaken. . . ."

Or turn to More's account of Buckingham's defection from Richard's party. "Vanity and curiosity," one can hear Morton saying, "were Buckingham's weaknesses, as they are those of so many people. I made use of them. I praised his best qualities and let him see, when he fell foul of the King, that I wished Richard had had them as well as those other abilities that we were all acquainted with. I did not tell him all my mind, but let him discover it so gradually that, where he really followed, he seemed all the while to lead; and this not only gratified him, but protected me, for I committed myself to little or nothing that he had not committed himself to first. I made indeed no secret of my caution. I remember getting a laugh out of him when I said that I had ever in mind *Æsop's* tale of the animal with a protuberance on its forehead, which, when the King of Beasts excluded all horned creatures from a particular wood on pain of death, left it hastily and, to the fox's taunt that the protuberance did not fall within the meaning of the Lion's decree, replied with the observation 'But what if he call it a horn, where am I then?'"

History as it dropped from Morton's lips into More's mind suggested, as we can see if we study More's "Richard III" closely, two salient reflections—the same two, indeed, that the history of the Wars of the Roses was to impress upon Shakespeare. There is first the thought of politics as no better—to borrow a phrase that More puts into the Queen-Mother's mouth in speaking of Richard's crooked way with her—than a "painted process." The atmosphere is heavy with deceit; treachery strikes this way and that like the forked lightning; and the courtiers are as men dancing at a masque of the red death. And, in contrast to the great players in the political game, More shows us, much as Shakespeare does, the common English crowd, loyal and simple, with its good heart and its muddled mind, now refusing ever to hear again a popular preacher who had lost his soul to the usurper, and

then itself falling a prey to the wiles of the politician. Well might Erasmus write of him to von Hutten some years after his "Richard III" appeared that "no one was less led by the judgment of the vulgar, yet again that no one was nearer to common sense"!¹

More, it is clear, had become fully aware before ever Shakespeare said it that all the world was a stage and all the men and women players. He might not, indeed, have had his "place in the history of art"² as the patron of Holbein if he had not so fully understood the part that human character holds in the interpretation and development of its still unfathomable plot. No predestinarianism, no fatalism, spoilt his supreme sense of individual life as essentially a matter of conscience between man and God any more than the attentive ear he gave to Plato's politics changed his belief in the family as the final unit of value in politics. The great drama of mankind thus reached for him as certainly from earth to heaven as from the new-found Indies to Cathay. Not that anyone had as yet thought of attempting to work political institutions without some religious apparatus! The Heavenly Powers were taken for granted, and sometimes, as we shall see, taken to all appearance in tow. Whilst plain men looked to see if God would not be intreated, statesmen in their worst moments merely wondered if God could not be mocked. The three Kings who in those days towered above the rest—Louis XI of France, Ferdinand the Catholic of Spain and Henry VII of England: the three Magi, as the wits called them—were in fact as remarkable for religious conviction as for political astuteness.

Such, then, was the world in which More first drew the breath of politics; and it is no wonder if the March wind of Morton's conversation left its mark upon his mind. So plain,

¹ Allen, "Opus Epist. Des. Eras.," Vol. IV, No. 999.

² See "Dictionary of National Biography," article on "Thomas More."

indeed, to some has seemed its impress as to make them conjecture that the "History of King Richard the Third" was actually Morton's work. But there seems no reason to suppose them right. That first essay in English biography, much as it may owe to Morton's recollections, has all the look of owing much also to More's phrases. The sage in Morton first taught the boy to see things as they really were. And, some twenty years after, the stylist in More would write things as they should be written. He, so Prof. Chambers maintains, "was the first man who possessed a prose style equal to all the needs of sixteenth-century England," and with his "History of Richard III" "begins modern historical writing of distinction."¹ Notwithstanding this rare power of description his historical sense, if a conjecture may be risked, remained unsatisfied. He seems to have felt a wish to possess himself of the house where Richard had walked and talked and where Richard's plots were woven. At all events in 1519 he became the tenant and in 1523 the owner of Crosby Place,² of which the remains—the Hall—were in our time moved to the site of More's later house in Chelsea.

Whether the Cardinal ever wished his brilliant pupil to become a priest, we do not know, but the time came when to his watchful eye it seemed good to move the young man to Oxford; and the choice of that place of learning must be reckoned a happy decision. Macaulay has a characteristically brilliant passage in which he associates the spirit of the Reformation with the genius of "the less ancient and splendid," to borrow his words, of the two great English Universities. It was from Cambridge, as he points out, that Cranmer came and Latimer, Ridley and Parker, Burghley and Bacon; and, though his thesis might be a little embarrassed by the mention of Hooper and Hooker,

¹ R.W. Chambers, "On the Continuity of English Prose," liv and xlviii.

² Teetgen, "Footsteps of Sir Thomas More," p. 74.

the association of the new outlook with the newer foundation need not in general be contested. It may be but an accident that in the English war of religion the cause of the King and the Cavaliers had its citadel in Oxford, the cause of the Parliament and the Puritans its home in the Eastern Counties; but so it was, and the tradition which centuries have consecrated continues, doubtless not without exceptions, to this day. Still perhaps do the Humanists think with greater grace as the dreaming spires and immemorial towers of the older University rise before their eyes; and still do the Physicists tend to make sure of irrevocable law and inexorable flux as they watch the water for ever flowing beneath the bridges of the Cam. Plato, it is true, can spread his wings as well in sight of the Chapel of King's or the great quad of Trinity as where Boar's Hill or Shotover look down upon the still mystic, if much-beleaguered city below, and Aristotle peripatetically pursue his way as easily through Cambridge town or along the backs of its Colleges as along Addison's Walk or Christchurch Meadows. To recall the Cambridge Platonists is indeed to admit that the elements here are shrewdly mixed, and to compare the claims of Friar and of Francis Bacon to be called Father of English Science is to confess honours easy. Yet, for all that, a difference of mentality as subtle as it is certain divides the two Universities; and it is just such a difference as to cause any sensitive student to feel sure that More was in his place at the one he went to and might have been less so at the other.

The Oxford of More's time looked, of course, very different from the Oxford of to-day. Christchurch was not yet, nor had Magdalen its Walk, its Tower or its Bridge. But New College, as one of its alumni must be excused for observing, was there in its glory, together with Balliol and "Univ.," All Souls and Oriel, Merton and Queen's, and a wealth of halls and religious houses that have since dis-

appeared. A probable tradition maintains that More occupied rooms in Canterbury Hall, which stood on the site of the Canterbury Quad of the present Christchurch. All we can be certain of, however, is that, wherever his lodgings were, he lived without luxury, in the manner rather of the mediæval than the modern scholar. This hardness of life and narrowness of circumstance, which his father had some share in imposing, left no memory of bitterness; for he counted all gain that gave him more occasion for study. At the end of less than two years he is said to have been "sufficiently instructed"¹ in the Greek and Latin tongues, and even to have made wonderful progress in² them, and, though Prof. Chambers displays some scepticism as regards the Greek section of this statement, we have to remember that Richard Pace, who was excellently well qualified to give an opinion, declares that More possessed an altogether incomparable genius—and especially in his Greek translations—for seizing the force of a passage without seeming to arrive at it through the separate meaning of the words.³ It is Pace, too, who tells us that More's merriment was utterly free from coarseness, and that humour was his father and wit his mother. More's early writings, even if it be true that some of his "metrical effects adumbrate the art of Spenser,"⁴ have long lost their savour; and his tale of the serjeant who played friar serves chiefly to show the Tudor sense of fun, just as his lament over Queen Elizabeth—the white rose, that is, of York—serves for little else but an illustration of the Tudor sense of sorrow. Another early piece of his which may be read, with at least as much pleasure and more curiosity than these, has for its subject the pageant of life, or perhaps more truly the dance of death. The child with his top

¹ Roper.

² "Wonderfully profited in" (Harpfield and Ro. Ba.).

³ "R. Pacei de fructu qui ex doctrina percipitur liber," p. 82.

⁴ Sidney Lee, "Great Englishmen," p. 59.

SOME KINGS AND A CARDINAL

first succumbs to the young man with his horse and hawk and hound; and then Adonis in his turn is pierced by Cupid's dart and falls a prey to Venus. The best, however, in More's eyes, is still to come when Age appears upon the scene:—

“Old Age am I, with locks thin and hoar,
Of our short life the last and best part.”

For old age with More is no lean and slippered pantaloon, but the very embodiment of sagacity and discretion. Death, indeed, in the next tableau of the tapestry closes this phase with the reminder that he is irresistible and inescapable. But pass on, and see him overcome by Fame, which embalms the memory of his victim. Not for ever! Time enters next with his hour-glass and calls Fame a simpleton for forgetting him. But Time itself is not the end; and the close of all discloses Eternity:—

Thou mortal Time, every man can tell,
Art nothing else but the mobility
Of sun and moon changing in every degree.
When they shall leave this course, thou shalt be brought,
For all thy pride and boasting, into nought.

As we look back over these crude verses, we see that the kaleidoscope which they cause to revolve is nicely calculated to show that the pains of dissolution, even to old age, even at death, issue continually in nobler being. Still in his teens, More had in fact worked out a scheme of life permitting no man to grow really old. Life, if its phases are not the series of stepping-stones to higher things of the later Poet, resolves itself into the ludicrous decline of Jacques's seven stages or the strutting player and idiot's tale of Macbeth's conclusion. It was in More's bones, so to say, to see it as a progress, revealing more than it removes, rendering back a fuller joy of youth than that which it takes away. There was nothing new in this; for it is a leading motif in the liturgy of the Mass to which he daily listened. But his apprehension of it

was already real, and as a result, perhaps, he left the University with as just an estimate of human life and as fine a sense of human destiny as any man of his generation. And the knowledge served him well and remained with him to the end.

The current of time, swift as that noble river which, at the great crises of his life, bore him on its bosom—to his high seat at Westminster, his home at Chelsea, his trial at Lambeth, his prison in the Tower—now, like a silver thread, seemed to lead him forward from Oxford to London, and on into manhood. A student first at New Inn, one of the so-called Inns of Chancery, and then again, as his legal education progressed, at Lincoln's Inn, he was presently, though at a date we cannot precisely fix, admitted to the Bar. More or less contemporaneously with that call to his profession, two other voices fell upon his ear—the voice of Erasmus bidding the noisy world reform itself by increasing knowledge, and, as across a desert air, the voice of the Carthusians calling him, in this, the morning of his life, and sweetly as Memnon's harp beneath the rays of the rising sun, to leave the world and come away.

III

ERASMUS

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS—to give him the name which more than any other name in existence may claim to have repeated the emphasis of passionate love¹—is one of those exceptional men whose scholarship was so fortunately combined with gifts of personality and power of expression as to give him not only posthumous fame, but contemporary influence. Like Montaigne in the succeeding century, like Voltaire in a later or Renan in the last, he knew how to attract, engage and retain the attention of his fellow-men. Not only, however, was his purpose nobler than theirs; but his accomplishments were, all things considered, more remarkable, since he had as his instrument, not the French but the Latin tongue, and for his inheritance, not Gallic wit but Dutch sobriety. His nature might indeed be held to establish, what some have doubted, the existence of "Batavian grace." Encumbered with the reproach of illegitimacy, branded with default in respect of a religious profession that he ought never to have made, dependent for his livelihood upon his learning, he made his way by the charm of his character from the spurs to the summit of Olympus, and might even at the end, it seems probable, have added to the laurels of scholarship a prelate's mitre or a cardinal's hat.

Erasmus's place in history is, in short, due to the fact that he contrived to say with point and finish what a good part of

¹ I am thinking, of course, of Landor's famous phrase in the imaginary conversation between Æsop and Rhodope.

the world was thinking and a still greater part feeling. He saw, what Horace Walpole said, that life was a comedy for the thoughtful and a tragedy for the sympathetic; he perceived how much human conduct ridicules, and human conditions desiderate Christianity; and he understood how to blend irony and idealism with a skill that compelled notice and fashioned opinion. If his own lapse from a monastery put him at some disadvantage as a critic of monks, his morality and his mockery combined to make him an admirable critic of men. For the earnestness of his purpose stands in no more doubt than the spice of his derision, and of few human beings perhaps is it safer to say that he was known to his friends as well as from them.

The fifteenth century, for all its obvious differences, had something in common with one in which telephonic and wireless communications have transformed the life of human society whilst leaving human nature itself unchanged. The invention of printing set plain men reading as they had certainly never read in the past; and the renascence of learning set more men thinking than had perhaps ever thought before. Mankind, to use an expressive modern phrase, was in fact once more upon the march. Erasmus saw, or perhaps rather scented, the presence of danger. He may have reflected that it is a good deal easier to get lost in the wilderness than to find the promised land. He may have considered how easily the devils of disintegration beset an army that has surrendered to discontent. But at all events his intelligence told him where lay the likely point of attack and what weapons would be used. Before subversive criticism could get to work upon the clergy he forestalled the force of it by bringing, himself, the more damaging charges; and, before the Reformation had attempted to monopolise the Bible, he was forcing it in the light of the new learning upon the attention of his contemporaries.

These tactics were bold and, perhaps, too boldly pursued; but we can see now that they were both tempting and suited to the occasion. The clergy of the late fifteenth century, like the propertied classes in the early twentieth, were about to be called to account for whatever of indolence, selfishness and ineptitude had attended their use of great privileges and their administration of great possessions. Erasmus strove, though at the eleventh hour, to persuade them, with all the compulsion that ridicule can bring, to put their house in order. They were not, however, too ready to be reformed; whilst their enemies were all too eager to reform them. His writings were consequently torn from their context and converted from pleas for improvement into arguments for destruction. His sarcasms had been so keen, piercing the very joints and marrow, that it was no wonder the priest-haters and monks-hammers of the time seized upon them, or that, once battle between Catholic and Protestant had been fully joined, the "Encomium Moriaë"—that famous "Praise of Folly" with its punning reminiscence of his praise of More—was banned by the Sacred Congregation. But we utterly misconceive Erasmus's mind if we suppose that his criticisms contained any seed of rebellion against the Church or repudiation of the Papacy. Not so had he read his New Testament; nor was he thus ignorant of what his friend stressed with so much force—that the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat, and therefore, that whatsoever they commanded, men should observe and do. It was the works of the hierarchy that were not admirable, not their faith that was vain.

It is doubtless true enough that Erasmus, born satirist as he was, had enjoyed ridiculing the ridiculous. To honour all men is one of the most difficult of injunctions; to mock at mankind one of the most pardonable of weaknesses. There is white malice as well as black; and Erasmus in his way meant no more mischief than Jane Austen in hers. Wits, as he

observes in his own defence, have been always permitted the privilege of satire if they do not let it run to abuse; and one who, like himself, named no man in particular, but chastised all men's disorders in general, was rather to be reckoned a moralist than a caviller. He had, he declared, neither grumbled like Lucian, nor wallowed like Juvenal; and, if he had been hard, then St. Jerome had been harder.

The actual facts doubtless permitted, as usual, almost any picture to be drawn; and Erasmus, like the rest of us, had to generalise from a too limited experience. One might paint modern London in the style of Watteau by visiting Regent's Park on a summer's afternoon when the roses are in full bloom in the Inner Circle Gardens and the Open-Air Theatre is giving "A Midsummer Night's Dream." But a visitor to the Divorce Court at precisely the same hour would no doubt justify the use of Hogarth's brush in an up-to-date version of "Marriage à la Mode." The probable truth about the men of Erasmus's time was that men on the whole were no better than they should be, and perhaps that clergymen had grown rather worse than they were. It was clear at all events that the world was tired of the power of the clergy; which is not in itself any great reproach to them, as mankind tires of all its rulers in course of time. Only the clergy were not so tired as they should have been of the governance of the world. Erasmus, with his gentle, scholarly mind, was distressed and disgusted by much that he saw, and in particular by the tendency that runs right through human nature to substitute the letter for the spirit and to let appearance do duty for reality. Yet his just observation no more made him a cynic than it made him a revolutionary. He believed, as every liberally-minded man believes, that right ideas make the best preventive of human wrongs. If his "Colloquia" are the proof that he had looked the world, with all its wickedness, in the face, his "Enchiridion Militis Christiani" is the fighting manual

of a Christian gentleman and his "Encomium Moriae" as subtle a commendation of the foolishness of the Cross as it is a plain commentary on the world's folly.

These various writings, telling as they were, if the worst must needs be told, and salutary as they might have been, if society had been willing to be saved, fell nevertheless short of what the situation required. The Church—to use a metaphor which Erasmus, with his pacific purposes, would perhaps have rejected for its militarism—had not only to get its household into training and its defences into order, but also its guns into action. The Bible represented at that time the key of the intellectual position. It was essential to satisfy the world that, far from having passed into the hands of the enemy, it was held by the Catholic forces in full security. "Apply yourself," Erasmus writes to a friend, "with all your heart to Sacred Literature. Pore over the old interpreters. Believe me, we shall come this way to God's blessing or we shall never come at all."¹ So earnest indeed was he in his enterprise that in 1516 he rushed out a Greek version of the New Testament to the great satisfaction, let it be observed, of the English bishops who—Warham and Fisher and Fox especially—did not stint their praise of this great act of Humanism.² Even so, events moved too fast for him. But of that in due season.

Of such a mind, then, though not yet of so fully developed a mind when More first met him, was Erasmus. But life is a romance of which the leading players seldom guess the fullness; and the wandering scholar who landed on English shores in the summer of 1499³ can have had no idea of the interest and importance that would one day attach to his movements and his friendships. He paints himself, indeed, at that time

¹ Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 390.

² See on this Brewer's remarks in "Letters and Papers," Vol. II, Pt. i, pp. cclxiv, xv.

³ So Nichols and Allen. Froude commits himself, however, to the year 1497, as does Bridgett in his "Life of More."

for Colet's benefit as no more than a good simple man without ambition, wealth, learning, or eloquence, and, in fact, with nothing to recommend him but a decent character. He observes that he was modest; and it would certainly appear so, for his fame was already European. "When I was in Paris," Colet writes to him, "Erasmus was not without celebrity in the mouth of the learned; an epistle of yours . . . served me when I read it, as a sort of sample and taste of an accomplished man with a knowledge both of literature and of a multitude of other things."¹ "But," adds Colet, "that which recommends you to me most is this, that the Reverend Father with whom you are staying² . . . affirmed to me yesterday that in his judgment you were a singularly good man."

Erasmus for his part found in England an Island of the Blest and in the Oxford scholars a company of the Blessed. The English climate, he declared, was pleasant and salubrious, and English learning not trivial or hackneyed, but so profound, accurate and ancient that to visit Italy had become less a care than a curiosity.³ In that elect society upon which he had thus hit, in that society which—to borrow his own estimates and appreciations—had at its command the comprehensive learning of Grocyn, the acute and delicate judgment of Linacre, the platonic phrases of Colet and the genius, than which Nature in his opinion had created none gentler, sweeter or happier, of More, he seems indeed for the moment a figure of pure romance. We watch him, almost as we watch the hero in "John Inglesant," walking—to borrow a commentator's words—"in Oxford gardens in . . . soft October sunshine"⁴ and debating there with Colet problems of religion and philosophy; or strolling with More, still in pursuit of truth, past the Temple and along the banks of

¹ Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 205.

² Viz. Richard Charnock, Prior of St. Mary's College, Oxford.

³ Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 226.

⁴ Allen (P.S.), "The Age of Erasmus," p. 128.



ERASMUS

From an engraving by L. Vorsterman after Holbein.

the Thames, again, or drifting off to visit Grocyn in his living of St. Lawrence Jewry to hear the last word of the wise on the study of the Scriptures.¹

Of all Erasmus's new friends it was perhaps Colet who affected his mind the most. Though the future Dean of St. Paul's had been trained in the philosophy of Aquinas his talk was calculated to excite discontent with the scholastic philosophy and to increase interest in the forgotten charms of Plato. "When I hear my Colet," Erasmus cries affectionately, "I seem to be listening to Plato himself."² Platonic philosophy was in truth once again in the air—a place, it must be allowed, which the fluttering of its graceful wings qualifies it to a peculiar degree to inhabit—and the world was turning its eyes once more towards the cloud-capped commonwealth where ideas had so far run away from actualities that men were credited with the mechanism of well-trained troops, women with the dispositions of the least reputable of their sex and objects of property with the nature, rather than the grace of remaining unappropriated.

Everything perhaps that could be safely taken from Plato's "Republic" for mortal consumption had been introduced by St. Augustine into his "City of God"; and the Church, when it came to the actual management of a world for the government of which it had perforce become largely responsible, turned for assistance to the more practical mind of Aristotle. The sage tutor of the Great Alexander had, after satisfying the claims of transcendentalism by the recommendation of the contemplative life as the most worthy of human pursuit, concentrated his attention upon the development of the "political animal." It must be reckoned no small testimony

¹ This not perhaps at his first visit to England. Grocyn, though appointed Rector of St. Lawrence Jewry in 1496, does not appear to have resided there until 1499.

² Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 226.

to the wisdom of Churchmen in their day or power that they preferred so calm and judicious a counsellor to his more brilliant and attractive compeer. But that, from time to time, mankind should turn back from the master of those who know to the master of those who dream can excite no surprise. Plato is the companion of youth, Aristotle of maturity, and, whenever the world grows, or fancies that it grows young again, it tires of balancing its thoughts on Aristotle's golden tight-rope and hitches its waggon to Plato's ascendant star. Little wonder, then, that, in this hour of renaissance supremely so called, Plato's witcheries were at work.

Our eyes ought all this while to be taking oblique glances at the young Platonist whom Erasmus encountered, according to his great-grandson's account, for the first time at the Lord Mayor's table.¹ The younger disciple took the elder by storm. "Aut tu es Morus aut nullus"²—"Either you are More or no-one." To which the retort came, swift as lightning, "Aut tu es Erasmus aut diabolus"—"Either you are Erasmus or the devil." "With what affection," writes Batt, "does Erasmus describe . . . More's sweetness."³ "Jesting apart," so Erasmus had himself written a little before to the charmer, "I do beg, sweetest Thomas, that you will cure that sickness which we have contracted from the long want of you and your handwriting by a payment with interest. We expect, not a mere letter, but a huge packet, enough to weigh down even an Egyptian porter."⁴

Here was love at the first sight and to the last farewell. And History, that so often hurries past pleasant things to pause before horror and distress, may well make one of its rare exceptions in favour of these lovers. For in fact two of the best

¹ It would not be surprising if Sir Henry Colet is meant.

² Cresacre More, "Life of Sir Thomas More," p. 93.

³ Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 230.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 213. Allen, "Opus Epist. Des. Eras.," I, p. 266.

minds then at work in Northern Europe had met and kissed each other, not like men of alien nations meeting, but like citizens of the same city. The world has still its universal tongues—the diplomatic tongue, which is French, and the tongue of commerce, which is English. But these uses are born of negotiation and have no true heart of grace. The language in which More and Erasmus conversed set the pulses of Latin civilisation beating, sent the common blood of Christianity coursing through Christendom, and acted as a perpetual reminder that above and beyond all the sentiment of state and country there are larger loves and a relationship into which humane men can enter and in spirit continually dwell. Erasmus, if ever any man, knew the meaning of that communion of clerks against which our own age is alleged to have committed deadly treason—a “*trahison des clerics*”; and his mind is seen in that treatise against war (“*Dulce Bellum Inexpertis*”) which he sent to the Pope about the same time as he published his version of the New Testament. “If there be anything in the world,” he declares in words which may give even the most combative of pacifists pause, “that should be taken in hand with fear and doubting, yea, that ought by all manner of means to be fled, to be withstood by prayer and to be clean avoided, it is war.” And if we ask why, he has his reason ready. “Nature, or rather God, hath shaped this creature (that is, Man) not to war but to friendship, not to destruction but to health, not to wrong but to kindness and benevolence. For whereas Nature has armed all other beasts with their own armour . . . man alone she hath brought forth naked, weak, tender and without any armour, with most soft flesh and smooth skin.”

This, it seems pertinent to interject, is no piece of pious fancy, but a golden thread woven like some symbol of excellent craftsmanship into the pattern of our story and appearing so much the more clearly as More’s portrait is

freed from the insidious dust of time. Once and again we shall find cause to remind ourselves that the golden age is a truth for which anthropologists now assure us that "the evidence is so definite and abundant that it becomes a problem of psychological interest to discuss why men persist in denying the fact of man's innate peacefulness."¹ For the Natural Man, whom Erasmus, acutely alive though he was to what individual beings can become, was still looking at through the eyes of Aquinas² as one born to love his like and to see his fellow-creatures in some sense as familiars and friends, and whom More, not only from Aquinas but from Bracton, the great master of the Common Law, was learning cause to presume good unless proved evil, had still the humane beauty that Hobbes and Hume were to take from him.

They walked, then—these two dreaming spirits—about the slopes of Parnassus and around the City of God like twin-brothers,³ talking of all things human and divine, translating Lucian, debating theology, looking now at one, now at the other of Man's two faces, seeking, after the old formula, to know themselves, and so reaching the very core of Humanism where in the profound recesses of thought and freedom the godlike element in men appears.⁴ And everywhere they strove to make mirth and to maintain measure; and their communion was as the meeting of waters sparkling with gleams of lambent light; for they were Greeks. But on a day, of which the remembrance must serve to call us back to earth, they walked together in a more literal sense; and in the light

¹ G. Elliot Smith, "On Human History," p. 189.

² "Contra Gentiles," III, cap. 117. "Est autem omnibus hominibus naturale ut se invicem diligant," etc.

³ Erasmus's own confirmation of Whitford's description of the relationship between himself and More as such will be found in Nichols's, "Ep. of Erasmus," I, p. 407.

⁴ I have in mind Gilson's chapter on "La connaissance de soi-même" in his "L'Esprit de la Philosophie Médiévale."

of what was presently to come the occasion is not without interest.

It was when Erasmus was stopping at Greenwich that More, still no more than a student at Lincoln's Inn, came and carried him off on foot to Eltham Palace, where the younger members of the royal family were being brought up. They were received with some ceremony. The royal retinue had for one reason or another been swollen by Mountjoy's household; and all were assembled in the hall. "In the midst," writes Erasmus, casting his eye back a quarter of a century later, "stood Prince Henry, then nine years old, and having already something of royalty in his demeanour, in which there was a certain dignity combined with singular courtesy." His sisters had their places on either hand of the boy; and a baby-prince, still in the nurse's arms, completed the picture. More paid his respects, coupling with them the presentation of some sort of address in writing. A challenging note from the little Prince, delivered during luncheon, apprised Erasmus that as much had been expected of himself. The wits even of the witty are not always equal to the occasion. Erasmus had nothing ready and could improvise nothing on the spur of the moment. He felt, as he tells us, provoked with More for not having warned him to be prepared. On his return he set himself to compose a poem in praise of the King of England and his progeny. Conceived in heroic verse and iambic metre, this took him three days to execute. It is to be hoped that the exacting little nine-year-old Prince to whom it was dedicated was better satisfied with the attention than he proved to be, later on in life, with all that people did for him.

These be toys, no doubt, and trifles, yet are not without their place in our drama. The religious future of an imperial people lay, so to speak, on the lap of the imperious child who, that distant day, received More and Erasmus at his father's house. Here was all the making of a morality play, with

Prudence and Fortitude crossing at the outset the path of a career. Presently would come Pride with other impersonations, Lust and Avarice. But not yet! The first pull upon the boy came from the side of the Angels.

Erasmus left England early in the year 1500, and did not return there until five years later. Much happened to More in the interval, for, not only did he enter Parliament and marry, but became a practising barrister, and it is a living lawyer¹ and high authority who warns us that in all the books and articles written about More there has been a uniform failure to appreciate the effect upon his mind of his legal training and of all that the common law text-books must have taught him about freedom. Yet, even so, it was a matter of still greater importance that he had spent four years in the Charterhouse.

¹ Mr. Richard O'Sullivan, K.C., in the "Dublin Review," July 1936, on "Social Theories of Sir Thomas More."

IV

THE CARTHUSIANS

THE Carthusian Monasteries have been recently held up¹ to our eyes as the consummating expression of a view of life which at the opening of the sixteenth century was about to be challenged and in this country pretty well destroyed. It is true, of course, that neither monastery nor market-place nor any other product of solitude or multitude can stand as the exclusive symbol of an historic age. Man's nature is too complex, his moods are too many, his actions and reactions are too marked, and, if it comes to that, his very species is individually too various to say that the past has wholly perished or that human nature, revolving in its prison, will return no more upon its traces. Circumstance changes indeed, but shall we on that account hold him mistaken who declared that the more things changed the more they showed the same essential features? The world, we were told a little while ago, was being made "safe for democracy"—and behold such a crop of despots as has not been seen for a century! The rotation of seasons is more regular but hardly more certain than the rotation of the human mind.

Yet for all that and for all his just scepticism about the once proud dogma of progress, the historian of Tudor England has painted in his grandest and most graceful manner that transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern World which was contemporary with the lifetime of More and of Erasmus. We may doubt the rectitude of his conclusions; we cannot doubt

¹ D. and G. Mathew, "The Reformation and the Contemplative Life."

the brilliancy of his vision. No later writer can hope to repeat what has been once for all said so perfectly; and Froude's words must therefore stand as prologue to what lies ahead of us:—

“A change,” he observes, “was coming upon the world, the meaning and direction of which even still is hidden from us, a change from era to era. The paths trodden by the footsteps of ages were broken up; old things were passing away, and the faith and the life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream. Chivalry was dying; the abbey and the castle were soon together to crumble into ruins; and the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions of the old world were passing away, never to return. A new continent had risen up beyond the western sea. The floor of heaven, inlaid with stars, had sunk back into an infinite abyss of immeasurable space; and the firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but a small atom in the awful vastness of the Universe. In the fabric of habit in which they had so laboriously built for themselves, mankind were to remain no longer.”¹

“A change . . . the meaning and direction of which even still is hidden from us”! Hidden still no doubt in the same sense in which all the first and last things in our strange state of being—first cause and final end—are veiled from our eyes, yet by no means so wholly hidden as when Froude was writing! The lapse of the best part of a century has given time for the movement of which he wrote to work itself out and for a reaction to set in. The trend of thought is no longer from status to contract, but from contract back to status. Men claim as of right some place in a humane commonwealth and no longer as of chance some fortune in a commercial concern. Faith in the efficacy of individual freedom has naturally

¹ Froude, “History of England,” Vol. I, c. 1.

enough fallen into simultaneous decay. The duty of society is stressed instead of the right to manage one's own affairs. Nationality, too, is now very generally perceived by thoughtful people to be a dubious exchange for the wider range and more humane effect of some universal culture. In the intercourse of nations the idea of the State as the unit of sentiment evidently constitutes a deadly menace to the cosmopolitan ideals that the advances of physical science increasingly postulate and indeed, if human society is to continue, compel. And in short some entity, possessed either of spiritual energy or material force or both, continually imposes itself upon our minds as a political necessity, so that one might almost suppose that the ghost of the Holy Roman Empire was claiming its vacant, haunted chair at the councils of civilisation.

If it is thus with what Leslie Stephen would have called "the social tissue"—if, that is to say, mankind is being gradually forced by circumstance to resume, with what dignity it may, the positions that nineteenth-century Liberalism too hastily abandoned—how is it with the tendency of the "social organism"? Here again "direction" appears to have been reversed and "meaning" read anew into discarded forms. Democracy, installed at so great cost in power, has over most part of the world lost confidence in itself, and, clamouring for a hero or at least "a man," not infrequently taken refuge in a tyrant. In short, if the voice of the people judges right, it is no longer so easy to maintain that the Middle Age judged wrong.

That is, however, all as it may be. What deserves notice here is merely that "the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions" of the medieval world are no longer so completely beyond our reach as they were. We are in a better position to understand them than we have been for four centuries, for we are in many respects feeling after them or finding them. To revisit the world of the Renaissance is to wonder whether the wheel of

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fate may not be coming round full circle, or at least the whirligig of time be going to complete its cynical revenges. Certainly our own profound mistakes and tacit admissions have made us kin with our forebears in a manner that was not possible when Clio was riding the high horse of Progress down the cypress avenues of the past. A pedestrian humility seems now more appropriate to our condition; and there are at all events worse guides to wisdom.

With humility reinstated as a rational idea it becomes obvious to cross the frontier back into the Middle Age by the pilgrims' way of the Carthusians—a route at once promising and picturesque. Promising, because the track runs plain even through the Victorian era, and certainly picturesque, since it has moved one of the most sensitive of poets and sceptical of pilgrims to exquisite music! Let Matthew Arnold be heard as we climb the last steps to the Grande Chartreuse!

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
Till I possess my soul again;
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control!

It is a strange confession to have been wrung from the deep heart of a utilitarian age, this appeal for spiritual hospitality against the storm within, addressed to those cold, seemingly comfortless cells in the high valleys of Savoy. Only those who have visited the place and reflected how near it lies to the spot where Rousseau staged his famous "Vicaire Savoyard," can perhaps catch the full pathos of the poet's plaintive music.

But even without the memory of that chill mountain-valley or of its proximity to the delusive summer scene, the cry is full of meaning. For what did it all signify but that in the monastery, symbolically conceived, the tired traveller had discovered at last the hidden springs that wash the soul and brace the spirit for its journey from sensory images to eternal things? Here, behind a repellent austerity of aspect and in a ruthless discipline of athletes striving for incorruptible crowns, the soul seemed at last to find its orbit. Here had melancholy turned at last to meaning; here was the mountain from whose heights the promised land was seen; here did the sublime disclose the beautiful and the world of sense melt into the world of vision. Here of all places!

The eminent Victorian¹ only half believed it. Could this be to see life steadily and to see it whole? Yet to no mind like Arnold's need the idea have appeared surprising. He had chanced upon the lost plan of the very culture that he loved—of that Latin civilisation which had assimilated all that the Jews had to tell about God, the Greeks about Man, and the Romans about Society and where if anywhere Wisdom had built herself a house. For, as one of the most thoughtful writers of our time² has said, "Behind every civilisation there is a vision." That vision the contemplative life of the monk had pre-eminently supplied to Christian society. His work divided between the labour of the study, the garden and the field seemed to associate the dignity and depth of thought with the charm and grace of a pastoral; whilst his orisons, moving between the matin hour and the vesper bell to the measure of Time's hour-glass, presented an incomparable commentary upon the transient life of man, in the morning green and growing up like a flower,

¹ A friend suggests that Lytton Strachey has appropriated this expression to the use of Dr. Arnold. I must be allowed, then, to imagine it can pass by inheritance.

² Christopher Dawson.

then subject to the torrid, noonday heat, presently fading with the fall of day and, at its compline or completion, passing into the final mystery of repose.

Such intellectual and manual labour, such a horary of prayer were well calculated to produce the sense of proportion and sobriety of judgment upon which social life so largely depends. But a diviner poetry ran through the larger rhythm of the year—the dramatisation of a Life, contemplative in its essential features and outlook, yet miraculously accomplished without stain or blot upon it in the full glare of publicity and beneath the utmost challenge of political provocation. The meanness of circumstance at the beginning and the cruelty and suffering at the close only intensified its far-reaching social power. Here was life lived indeed like a poem, yet within everyone's reach to appropriate as his own. From Advent to Whitsuntide the modulations of its music rose and fell, the ascensions of the Nativity and Easter contrasting with the cadences of Passiontide and the Cross, until at Trinity the long-drawn-out meditation seemed to dissolve at last into the longed-for vision of God.

Thus were the rolling sequences of day and night swept into a larger measure, and the confounding impression of man's littleness against the realm of space outmatched by the clear-shining of one human track upon the sands of time. Mystical indeed, if mysticism be any reproach in a world by all rational accounts mysterious, but not so mystical that the unimaginative English mind was incapable of mastering it! Arnold may be right in saying that no Englishman could have written the "*Imitatio Christi*." But Englishmen of the fourteenth century wrote "*The Scale of Perfection*" and "*The Cloud of Unknowing*"; and these are books of which the effect may best be conveyed by pilfering from the familiar passage that paid Keats's debt to Chapman's Homer. To the watcher of celestial skies the reading of them may well have been as if

some new planet had swum into his ken and in the troubled mariner, searching for land amidst untravelled seas, have excited both silence and a wild surmise. The adventure of life thus mystically conceived as nothing less than the substitution of the divine for the dark image in the soul; the fallen nature of man really apprehended as the source of all the disastrous disintegration of Humanity both corporate and individual—these are the notions for which to the eye of the contemplative this world appears well lost or wisely left. Listen for a moment to the quiet voice of the old mystic as it comes down to us through the medium of the first printed edition of that ‘devout contemplative book of Scala Perfectionis,’ as More calls it,¹ which was published in the very year (1494) when he passed from Oxford to London and which the allusion shows that he must often have held in his hands.

“For that is the life which is very contemplative, to begin here in that feeling of love and ghostly knowing of God by opening of the ghostly eye which shall never be lost nor taken away, but the same shall be fulfilled otherwise in the bliss of heaven. . . . As much land as thou mayest tread upon with thy foot of very desire, so much here shalt thou have in the land of behest. . . . Seek then what thou hast lost that thou mayest find it. Well I wot, whoso might once have an inward sight of a little of that dignity and ghostly fairness which a soul had by kind² and shall have by grace, he should loathe and despise in his heart all the bliss, the liking and the fairness of this world as the stench of carrion. . . . Nevertheless, inasmuch as thou hast not yet seen what it is fully, because thy ghostly eye is not yet opened, I shall tell thee one word for all in the which thou shalt seek, desire and find it; for in that one word is all that thou hast

¹ Engl. Works, p. 356.

² *i.e.* nature.

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lost. This word is Jesus. I mean not this word Jesus painted upon the wall, or written with letters on the book, or formed with lips in sound of the mouth, or feigned in thy heart by travail of thy mind; for in this wise may a man without charity find Him. But I mean Jesus Christ that blessed Person, God and Man, son of the Virgin Mary, whom this name betokeneth; that is all goodness, endless wisdom, love and sweetness, thy joy, thy worship and thy everlasting bliss, thy God, thy Lord, and thy Salvation." ¹

The Scale of Perfection was, it seems, much read in Carthusian houses, and certainly to some purpose.² Erasmus declares that the Carthusians alone kept honesty and piety in religion; and then, with his usual light irony, adds that they kept these so close that no one got a chance of seeing them.³ However unjust this may be to other Orders, it is clear that the Carthusians at least had not let the world into the Church. Its approaches, so far as they were concerned, were as jealously guarded as when St. Bruno first planted their mother-house in that mountain-cleft of Savoy which Arnold visited. Still in their remote fastness they kept the key without which Latin civilisation remains a riddle unread. Shadows they sometimes seem to us, yet not after all such shadows as we should be pursuing, if their emprise were vain. For the real adventure of life is always with them—the exploration of a world lying by so many accounts just beyond our own and claiming us at last for its inhabitants, yet of which the very direction might be lost if men were not continually found to set out afresh and renew their observations.

The chants—or, since our state is so analogous to that of

¹ Walter Hilton, "The Scale of Perfection," Book I, chaps. 45, 46.

² See Dom M. Noetinger's *Introd. to the above book*.

³ "In Praise of Folly."

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seamen, shall we say chanties?—which accompany this quest must, then, in their plain Carthusian rendering, be thought of as a solemn music sounding continually at some distance from our stage; and those who hear it not will see indeed the play of Thomas More performed, but miss the lovelier oratorio. It was three centuries and more before Arnold was born that the strains of the Carthusian motif first fell upon More's ears, reaching him, not from the Grande Chartreuse, but from the scarcely less famous London Charterhouse, which, set upon the confines of the City, asserted, impressively enough amid the stir and dust of the capital, the existence of a world of invisible and imponderable values. The place since More's days has gathered more poetry to itself by the ripening there of battered old-age against the coming of Time's sickle; but not all the pathos and dignity of Colonel Newcome's death equal the majestic mortification of its first inhabitants. For the romance of the Carthusians is no exclusive property of high altitudes; the preoccupation of the mystic with the One and not the Many becomes no less impressive by contrast with crowded streets; and the shining traffic of Jacob's Ladder, as a later poet has warned us, descends as conveniently at Charing Cross as at other more becoming termini.

For a young man of More's dispositions confined to work within the gloomy purlieu of the law, the adjoining monastery in the first years of the sixteenth century must have possessed all, and more than all, the healing charm of some temple of Æsculapius. For, as perhaps at no other time of his existence, More felt sick at heart from the turbulence and turmoil of town-life—how sick, a letter to a friend discovers. "The City," he writes to Colet in the country, "helps no one to be good. . . . One sees everywhere false friends, the horrid poison of flatterers, fierce hatreds, quarrels, rivalries and contentions. Look around and you will see butchers, confectioners, fishmongers, carriers and cooks all busy serving the

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world, the flesh and the devil. Houses to a large extent block out the light and the view is bounded, not by the horizon but by the house-tops." ¹ Such to his eyes appeared the city of man's making! And over against it there rose before his mind a picture of St. Augustine's City of God. He spoke of it in some lectures of a philosophical and historical, rather, it seems, than theological character, which he delivered about this time in the Church of St. Lawrence Jewry, presumably at Grocyn's request. These have perished; but some indication of their quality may be gathered from the fact that his audience called him golden-mouthed. And it may well seem that one so minded and so endowed must have passed on for good and all from the street of the butchers, fishmongers, carriers, confectioners and cooks into the peace of the Charter-house except for some contrary circumstance. There was such a circumstance. It seems as plain as such things can conveniently be made that More felt his desire for marriage too strong and his capacity to lead the life of a religious, as it should be led, too doubtful, to allow him to regard his devout inclinations as a genuine call. Yet it would appear to be such a mistake as critics should endeavour to avoid to suppose with the late Dr. Allen, ² on the strength of some casual words of Erasmus, that More's life at this time was not above reproach. What Erasmus actually says in one of the best character-studies that exist ³ is that More as a young man was not indifferent to the charms of young women, but without scandal, the point of such affections for him lying rather in conquest

¹ Abridged from Hallett's edition of "Stapleton's Life of More," p. 12. Cp. E. M. Routh, "Sir Thomas More," p. 25.

² P. S. Allen, "Age of Erasmus," p. 205.

³ The letter is translated in Nichols's "Epistles of Erasmus," and the passage will be found in Vol. III, on p. 393. In the Latin it runs: Cum ætas ferret, non abhorruit (Thom. Morus) a puellarum amoribus, sed citra infamiam, et sic ut oblati magis frueretur quam captatis et animo mutuo caperetur potius quam coitu." I have discussed the issue further in an appendix.

than consummation and in sympathy rather than sex. He was no doubt a very attractive young man as Erasmus remembered him at the age of twenty-three, with his middle height and well-knit frame, his fair complexion just dashed with colour, his deep auburn hair, his kindly eyes of greyish-blue—reputedly the mark of clear vision—and withal that gracious gaiety which filled his presence with enchantment. No wonder if the young women threw themselves at his head, and small blame if he a little enjoyed his success with them!

An earlier passion helps us to give to these affairs their proper value—that romance of More's at the age of sixteen of which we now know no more than that, while crushed by the opposition of the lady's relatives, it survived in him even after the lapse of a quarter of a century. A later hand converted his own Latin record of the affair into the polished verse of another century, and in that verse, in spite of the incongruity of style, its significance is perhaps best conveyed:—

Crimeless my heart you stole in life's soft prime
And still possess that heart without a crime:
Pure was the love which in my youth prevail'd
And age would keep it pure if honour fail'd.¹

More, then, had looked for romance in the holy estate of matrimony, and afterwards conceived it under the holier seclusion of the Carthusian's cowl or the rude poverty of the Franciscan's habit; and we shall understand what followed the better for keeping these circumstances in mind. For it was in face of his failure to make either a love-marriage or a spiritual one that More turned in the end to a commonplace solution of the problem and married for marrying's sake. The decision is without charm, but it was not without chivalry. His choice had fallen upon the younger daughter of one John Colt, a gentleman of Essex resident at Netherhall near Roydon; but, when it occurred to him that their engagement might prejudice

¹ Wrangham, "British Plutarch," I, p. 139.

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the prospects of her elder sister, Jane, he proposed for the hand of the latter instead.

Erasmus saw in this oddly chosen bride a lady indeed, but one with a character unformed and tastes uncultivated. Others have seen in her the shrew who was deluded by her husband with sham jewels in one of Erasmus's stories and the vixen who beats her head upon the ground when she is crossed, in another. Whether or not these identifications are right, it is clear that in due course Mistress More fell a victim to that "fatal felicity" which used, so Erasmus declared, to overtake all the persons in More's household and raise both their fortunes and dispositions to higher powers. More's constant kindness and vigilant mockery were in fact irresistible, and not least so to his wife. In the five years of their married life—at least in the view of Erasmus, who had some chance of knowing—she learned to afford her husband excellent companionship. And certainly, if indications can be trusted, she devoted herself to him and left him, not certainly inconsolable, yet regretful and reminiscent. As he looked back over their days together, when Time had toned their union to a finer harmony of colour, he saw her as his "dear little wife"—*cara uxorecula Mori*, as he phrased it for his epitaph. Some suggestion of music attaches to her name, for, to please him, she had trained herself to play the modest instruments of the period, and to play them extremely well. Also she had given him children—a son and three daughters, the incomparable "Meg" among them.

"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," says David to the wondering courtiers, who had marked his deep agitation whilst his child by Bathsheba lay sick and been proportionately perplexed by the sudden calm that followed when the boy died. More, if one dare risk a conjecture, accepted the event of his wife's death with something of the same resignation. An invariable habit of looking the facts straight

in the face was doubtless fortified in his instance by a good assurance of immortality. "He talks with his friends about a future life," so Erasmus reported, "in such a way as to make you feel that he believes what he says and does not speak without the best hope."¹

But let these things be and the interpretation of them as it may be. Within two or three years of his wife's death, according to his great grandson,² within some months only according to Erasmus, but, according to one testimony that cannot be disregarded—that of Father Bouge, his Carthusian counsellor or confessor³—actually within a month of her burial, More resolved to marry again; and this against the advice of his best friends. In a less admirable man such rapidity—especially if Father Bouge's memory did not fail him—must provoke criticism, and even in him it can hardly pass without comment. That his action was lacking in sentiment is not, however, to say that it was lacking in sense. He had long ago resolved to be married; and now the argument of nature had been reinforced by that of circumstance. His children were very young; and he was very busy. He found them a capable stepmother and himself an excellent housewife. But, as usual, he saw the affair with clear eyes. *Nec bella admodum, nec puella*—no great beauty nor in her first youth—is his own unflinching account, as reported by Erasmus, of one whose nose taken in conjunction with her dispositions was characterised by one unappreciative friend as "the hooked beak of the harpy."

Mistress Alice Middleton,⁴ a widow, was quite a good

¹ To Ulrich von Hutten. See Nichols, III, p. 399.

² Cresacre, *More's Life* (ed. 1726), p. 32.

³ See Gairdner, *English Historical Review* (1892), VII, 714. Fr. Bouge's statement, it must, however, be remembered, was made in 1535 of events that happened in 1511.

⁴ Prof. Pollard's letter in *The Times Literary Supplement*, March 27, 1930, on the subject of Mrs. Middleton appears to be in conflict with the statements of Prof. Chambers (p. 109) and Miss Routh (p. 46, footnote). Prof. Pollard would make the lady Alice Middleton by birth and the widow of

sort of woman, but, married to a man like More, became the sport of all critical observers, and has so continued unto this day. If not perhaps quite a dragon, she was, some punster might have been tempted to suggest by way of amendment, a dragoon; whilst, had she not been the wife of Sir Thomas More, one might perhaps have thought of her as a possible match for some ancestor of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, always supposing that he had not first perceived the volume of her thought to be no pair to the size of her conversation. But More, though plainly under no greater illusion about her mind than about her looks, proved himself as usual fully equal to the occasion, and, by laughing at and loving her and by turning her mind to music, made himself as admired a home as any in England. No sense, indeed, of her provoking insufficiency ought to blind our eyes to the fact that after her manner she made him happy. It is uncertain, he observes quaintly of himself in the epitaph that he wrote in 1532 for a projected tomb in Chelsea Church, which of his wives was the more dear to him, and then proceeds to say, "Oh! how well could we three have lived joined together in matrimony, if fortune and religion would have suffered it. But I beseech our Lord that this tomb and Heaven may join us together."

It was More's last word on the subject; and it might serve for ours. He had never, as he said himself, looked to get to heaven in a feather-bed; and he neither sought nor found a feather-bed in marriage. Yet of no man perhaps could it be said more justly than of him that, having made his bed, he lay on it—and on the whole lay upon it very comfortably. There was something, of course, of the saint in all this—

one Thomas Elrington. Prof. Chambers makes her the widow of John Middleton, and Miss Routh makes Mr. Elrington the first husband of her daughter, subsequently Lady Alington. I cannot, I fear, in face of so much learned and inconclusive research, pretend to any opinion at all.

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enough to make him a model for married men whose wives are neither models of pleasantness nor peace. As for the rest, let Erasmus say it:

"The perfection of Christ consisteth only in the affections. . . . There be among the monks some scarce fit to be put in the third circle, and I speak of such as be good though weak and imperfect. There be among those that have had two wives some that Christ thinketh fit for the first circle."¹

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

On the Private Life of More as a Young Man

A note upon this subject seems called for, since the late Dr. P. S. Allen in his "Age of Erasmus" (p. 205), having first pointed out, on the strength of evidence which he does not furnish, that a Flemish nobleman was credited with being the father of thirty-six bastards, proceeds to say that More "as a young man was not blameless," and that Erasmus states the fact "in quite explicit though graceful language."

Prof. Chambers for his part gives this opinion some countenance, but he seems to me to approach the subject less in the spirit of English Law than of a cynical philosophy. "Cellini," he says on p. 104 of his "Life of More," "would have given us much interesting gossip, and perhaps even some scandal about Thomas More which might have dissipated that atmosphere of blamelessness which is the greatest difficulty with which More's biographer has to cope." After this it is less surprising than it might otherwise be to read: "Erasmus speaks of his (More's) early love-affairs in language which

¹ "Enchiridion," Introductory Epistle.

would certainly be understood by his readers to mean that More's youth had not been altogether blameless" (p. 86).

The evidence upon which these opinions are based is the following passage in Erasmus's well-known letter to Ulrich von Hutten: "*Cum ætas ferret non abhorruit (i.e. Thomàs Morus) a puellarum amoribus, sed citra infamiam, et sic ut oblati magis frueretur quam captatis et animo mutuo caperetur potius quam coitu.*" Nichols, a friend of Allen's, translates this:¹ "When of a sentimental age he was not a stranger to the emotions of love but without loss of character, having no inclination to press his advantage and being more attracted by a mutual liking than by any licentious object."

A friend of the first qualifications in Latin scholarship suggests as an alternative the following: "When he was of the age for love, he showed no aversion from women, but he destroyed no one's good name. In fact he was always rather the tempted than the tempter and found more pleasure in the intercourse of mind than of body." My friend observes further that two ambiguities in the Latin cannot be textually resolved: (1) to whom "*infamia*" relates—More or the *puellae* or both; (2) what precise value attaches to "*magis quam*" and "*potius quam*"—whether they negative "*captatis*" and "*coitu*" or must be interpreted strictly.

Whilst the Latin, then, is patient of Dr. Allen's and Prof. Chambers's interpretation, certain historical considerations tell, in my judgment, conclusively the other way. In the first place, to read the sentence in Dr. Allen's sense is to prove a great deal too much. To do full justice to its implications More might have to be described as a Don Juan in his youth. But, in the second place, even to reduce the implication to two or three liaisons, is to make all the rest of Erasmus's letter ludicrous. He is evidently attempting to depict, not only the most delicious human being he ever met,

¹ "Epistles of Erasmus," III, p. 393.

but the rare example of a Christian living in the world. He says in the course of his sketch, "*Ac talis Morus est etiam in aula. Et postea sunt qui putent Christianos non inveniri nisi in monasteriis.*" But on Allen's rendering he would only have described a Pecksniff, and a particularly odious one even at that—a seducer of young girls out of mere vanity, who was at the same time lecturing to a body of eminent divines on Augustine's "*City of God.*" Add to this the fact that of all types of men Erasmus perhaps detested a hypocrite most; and the interpretation becomes, in my judgment, impossible.

Erasmus, if he were here to speak for himself, would, I fancy, say something like this: "Of course I meant nothing of the kind suggested. I said '*citra infamiam*' to make that clear. What happened, I have always understood, was that the girls threw themselves at More's head—he was, you know, quite extraordinarily attractive—and that he enjoyed his social successes, as young men will, and old men too if they are lucky enough to have them. But he was absolutely without malice or wickedness, and I couldn't possibly have said so more clearly than I do in the rest of my letter."

Anyone who still has his doubts may find it worth while to consider that, although, as Prof. Chambers points out, Erasmus's letter had been "published through Europe in edition after edition," More at his trial, when he stood alone and fallen, was in a position to reflect upon Rich's evidence against him by charging Rich with a loose, immoral life from his youth up. If he had himself been the rake that Allen seems ready to make him, he laid himself open to the most obvious and devastating retort from cynics like Audley and Rich who, as brother-lawyers, would certainly have heard all that was to be known about the ex-Lord Chancellor's character as a young man. But no such retort appears to have been so much as attempted.

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It appears to have been about the date when he exchanged the thought of the cloister for that of the hearth that More began to interest himself in the life and character of one of the most subtle, engaging and representative figures of the Italian Renaissance. The haze of time and the charm of circumstance have doubtless alike contributed to enhance the fame of Pico, "Earle," as More quaintly calls him, "of Mirandula." He lives, at least for some of us, in the cunning portrait that Walter Pater has made of him—the portrait of a distinguished, scholarly, rather tragical young man concerned with the deeper problems of life and dying before his time so that the bay-wreath upon his brow is shot with cypress. But in reality he must have lacked that touch of languor which no creation of this artist is without, just as his hair lacked that trimming "with more than the usual artifice" which the same critic's slumbering scholarship has given it, though the Latin original in fact conveys precisely the opposite meaning.¹

More's own Latinity was, doubtless, proof against lapses, but, even had he made such an error as this, its incongruity must have given him pause. For he had picked Pico out with, so Stapleton assures us,² no small deliberation from among the leading laymen of the time to serve him for a model; and he was the last man to have chosen a *petit-maitre*. Pico, as his large labours show, was from the first made

¹ "Inaffectato capillitio."

² "Life of More," p. 10.

of sterner stuff. Not, however, that More was insensible to the adventitious grace of Pico's engaging appearance and real or supposed imperial descent! He was too good an artist not to give these things their place in the portrait of one whom he was going to show at the feet of Savonarola and whose renunciation of the world could by no means be construed as a repudiation of sour grapes. Full justice, and perhaps more, is in fact done to Pico's person. "He was," More observes in words that show his own powers of felicitous description, "of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair, his colour white intermingled with comely reds, his eyes grey and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow and not too picked. . . . The comeliness of his body with the lovely favour of his visage, and therewithal his marvellous fame, his excellent learning, great riches and noble kindred, set many women afire on him, from the desire of whom he, not abhorring (the way of life set aside), was somewhat fallen into wantonness."

Born beautiful and of a family possessed of place and power, Pico, whilst deeply in love with spiritual things and seeking the society of saints even before that of sages, had preferred—and this it was, as we have seen, that had first arrested More's attention—to remain a layman. His career, largely as a result had all the charm of a pilgrimage, not merely spiritual but also geographical and intellectual. In the few adult years at his disposal he appears to have visited the chief centres of Latin civilisation and to have drawn upon the wisdom both of the Greeks and the Hebrews, the Arabians and the Chaldees. He is found studying in the great schools and universities of France and Italy; learning canon law at Bologna; disputing, rather at the Duke's wish than his own, at Ferrara; gracing the Platonic Academy at Florence; and raising—not without some suspicion of heresy—no less than nine hundred questions,

philosophical and theological, at Rome. So ubiquitous an activity is for us, who have of necessity lost the grand manner of doing things, a little overwhelming; and even More seems sensible that only heroic attributes and exceptional opportunities could have created such an intellectual Hercules. "To the bringing forth of so wonderful effects in so small time," he affirms, "I consider five causes to have come together: first an incredible wit; secondly, a marvellous fast memory; thirdly, great substance by the which, to the buying of his books, as well Latin as Greek and other tongues, he was especially helped. Seven thousand ducats he had laid out in the gathering together of volumes of all manner of literature. The fourth cause was his busy and indefatigable study. The fifth was the contempt or despising of earthly things."

In that last reason for Pico's swift achievement, what we have called the Carthusian motif is to be heard again; and it was apparently with the aid of Pico's interpretation that More was first able to fit its celestial music to the native harmonies of his mind. There is nothing in this to surprise us, so much was there in More's natural dispositions reminiscent of Pico.

Listen a little to the phrases in which the Englishman speaks of the Italian Humanist and, all unconscious, seems almost to paint himself:—

"He was of cheer always merry and of so benign nature that he was never troubled with anger. . . . O very happy mind, which none adversity might oppress, which no prosperity might enhance. . . . Not his great substance, not his noble blood could blow up his heart; not the beauty of his body, not the great occasion of sin, were able to pull him back into the voluptuous broad way that leadeth to hell. What thing was there of so marvellous strength that might overturn the mind of him



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*From an engraving in Thevet's "Portraits et Vies
d'Hommes Illustrés," 1584.*

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which now (as Seneca saith) was got above fortune? . . . When another man offered him great worldly promotion if he would go to the king's court, he gave him such an answer that he should well know that he neither desired worship nor worldly riches, but rather set them at naught that he might the more quietly give himself to study and the service of God. . . . All praise of people and all earthly glory he reputed utterly for nothing: but in the renaying (*i.e.* denying) of this shadow of glory he laboured for very glory, which evermore followeth virtue as an inseparable servant. . . ."

"Every day at certain hours he gave himself to prayer. To poor men always, if any came, he plenteously gave out his money, and, not content to give that he had himself ready, he wrote over to one Jerome Benivenius, a Florentine . . . that he should with his own money ever help poor folk and give maidens money to their marriage and always send him word what he had laid out that he might pay it him again. . . . Over all this many times . . . he gave alms of his own body. We know many men which (as St. Jerome saith) put forth their hand to poor folk, but with the pleasure of the flesh they be overcome; but he many days (and namely those days which represent unto us the passion and death that Christ suffered for our sake) beat and scourged his flesh in the remembrance of that great benefit and for cleansing of his old offences."

"And over that, he was come to that prick (*i.e.* point) of perfect humility that he little forced (*i.e.* cared) whether his works went out under his own name or not, so that they might as much profit as if they were given out under his name. And now set he little by any other books save only the Bible in the only study of which he had appointed himself to spend the residue of his life, saving that the common profit pricked him when he con-

sidered so many and so great works as he had conceived and long travailed upon, how they were of every man by and by desired and looked after."

"Liberty above all thing he loved, to which both his natural affection and the study of philosophy inclined him."

There then, and of course more fully in the context, is to be found the express image of a Humanist of the Italian Renaissance! An image sufficiently lovable, and not least by such as take the Bible and such a sort of liberty as consorts with humility for their lodestars, yet perhaps nowadays a shade austere in appearance, though not at the time austere enough to please Savonarola! To that stern prophet of judgment, the confidant, as he tells us himself, of Pico's inmost secrets, this young man of "great gifts and singular graces" seemed at the end to have fallen short of his vocation; and so, as More reports, the great Dominican declared in a highly critical *éloge* of his client which he delivered in the Duomo at Florence. For Pico, when still only in his thirty-second year, died of a fever which, to borrow More's language, "despised all medicines and overcame all remedy."

The condemnation may well have been harsh; but then Savonarola, true to his conception of the young charmer as one who, having great possessions, had made the great refusal, had seen Pico in vision "all compassed" by purgatorial fires, whence, as More gently adds, "he shall undoubtedly depart unto glory." However that may be, there is no occasion here to attempt to follow Pico beyond the attainment of that great certitude of soul which came to him when, on his deathbed, they offered him the crucifix, so that "he might, ere he gave up the ghost, receive his full draught of love and compassion" in the beholding of it. Did he believe it, the priest had inquired, to be the likeness of Him that was both

God and Man? And Pico had answered that he not only believed it, but also certainly knew it.

In such wise, then, passed one by whose profound culture even Savonarola was so impressed as to risk the somewhat rhetorical opinion that, had he lived, Pico would have excelled by his writings "all them that died this eight hundred years before him." An early death had, as in other like cases, invested the charm of his genius with a glamour as of perpetual youth; and it was no wonder, with the loveliness of Italian skies behind to help him, that he caught the fancy and held the attention of "that great lover of Italian culture, Sir Thomas More."¹

No single man, of course, could really embody the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. Yet Pico's life and personality are at least well fitted to correct that impression of some moral depravity essentially inherent in it. Roderigo Borgia was, in fact, seated on the papal throne as Alexander VI when Pico breathed his last in Florence, and Cæsar Borgia engaging the attention and admiration of Machiavelli about the time that More was giving his lectures upon the "City of God." But the humane world of Pico and More was as real as the inhuman world of the Borgias; and in any case it would be unfair to debit altogether to the account of Italy the works of two Spaniards of the grosser sort. Something, besides, can, as with most villains, be urged in their defence. Violent measures have in our own time and in great part of Europe been used against violent men; and, if "the Prince" *par excellence* were here to answer for himself, he would doubtless observe that his ruthlessness had been followed by a reign of law long unknown and long overdue in the States of the Church; just as the Pope who is held in remembrance only as an immoral libertine, would perhaps point out to us that he had qualities corresponding to his defects and used

¹ Walter Pater.

to warn his son that Rome was a free city where all might write and speak as they pleased.¹ Bad as the Borgias were, one must be credited with some regard for order and the other for liberty. It remains none the less true and none the less interesting that More had some opportunity of observing the Papal authority at its very worst.

Not, however, primarily with the Italy of the Popes was More at present concerned. The Italy which spoke to him through the mouth of Pico was already the Italy which has summoned through successive centuries the wisest of the children of men to its side. What it was one day to be to Winckelmann and Goethe, to Landor and Browning, that it was at this time to Colet and Erasmus, the one enabled to travel there by reason of his father's wealth and already home again before More got to work upon his study of "The Earle of Mirandula," the other, by contrast, compelled to count the cost to his scholar's slender purse. Alike they knew it for a dream of intellectual beauty and witnessed to the general truth which Gregorovius has none too willingly confessed in his observation with precise reference to this time that "art and learning had entered into the life of the Italians," and that, as he adds, "this cultured people was freer and more exempt from prejudices than any other in the world."² Cultured to a point that, indeed, to quote again the same authority, made all other countries appear barbarous, exempt from prejudice and, as things were then, exceptionally free, the Italians were better fitted than the rest of the world to display that particular diaphanous quality of Humanism which is perhaps its most delicate charm. The perception of sensible things almost as windows revealing through diamond-shaped panes a world, not false but friendly, not so much fleeting as promising to melt, at the opening of the casement, into vistas

¹ Gregorovius, "Rome in the Middle Ages," Bk. XIII, c. 5.

² "Rome in the Middle Ages," Bk. XIII, c. 4.

of transcendental beauty—that, with the power to render this sublime loveliness of a single reality almost indifferently in the terms of any art, is perhaps the ultimate reward that Humanism, like Poetry, affords to its truest votaries.

“Universale in tutte le cose degne”—catholic in all things worthy—they said of Niccoli, one of the choicest spirits of the movement; and the same might have been said to an even fuller degree of Pico. For he illustrated not only that renaissance of the mind which is so readily conceded to the Italy of his time, but likewise that other renaissance or regeneration of the spirit which, inaugurated by Savonarola after the manner of a son of thunder, receives its better expression, towards the close of the pontificate of Pico’s friend, the Medici Pope, Leo X, in the foundation of the memorable “Oratory of Divine Love.” “A stern and almost Puritan moral ideal,” observes no less measured an authority than the *Cambridge Modern History*¹ in speaking of that society, “was combined with a belief that there was no essential antagonism between faith and culture, between profane learning and Christian knowledge. As the great medieval theologians and scholastics had interpreted Christianity to their age and had harmonised the divergent elements in the knowledge of their time, so now in the Oratory of Divine Love the feeling found expression that the work had to be done afresh and that the new revelation given to men by the Renaissance must be incorporated into the system of Christian thought.”

Pico, though he died in 1494, and consequently some while before the Oratory of Divine Love was founded, worked in this sense and spirit, and, as we have seen, at the close of his life with something of the same austerity of manners and meditations. There was in him that courtesy of mind which seeks to reconcile and invest with its proper measure of truth everything that has ever engaged the finest feelings of mankind

¹ R. V. Laurence, “*Cambridge Modern History*,” II, p. 640.

—a courtesy as significant of a humanist as the reverse is significant of a pedant, and resting in the last analysis upon a faith in the original unity and integrity of human nature and in the merely negative or defective nature of evil. Stressing as it does all that raises man above the level of beasts, and also all that places him lower, if only by a little, than the angels, Humanism of this stamp tends to suffer reproach, not merely at the lips of that dark type of theology which blackens all the human race with pitch and burns good part of it in brimstone, but even of temperamentally gracious and sympathetic persons to whom, however, the study of self and circumstance has proved a rude awakening to the existence of some unfathomable and catastrophic mystery of evil at the very heart of things.

In Pico himself this conciliatory element took the topical form of attempting to establish a direct correspondence between the old pagan forms of faith, at that time so much in evidence owing to the returning interest in classical antiquity, and the one final and exclusive religion which he had received and in which he firmly believed. "Penetrated with the sense of the beauty and mystery of life, to him," it has been well said,¹ "it did not seem that Christianity was less true because Paganism was so beautiful." And in a spirit, very catholic in its way but unfamiliar with the ideas of comparative religion and evolutionary development, he sought to draw celestial harmonies from chords that may be struck in succession but not successfully at once. Something, however, of what he aimed at can, perhaps, be seen through another medium than his, admirably expressed as it has been in a work once more familiar than it is to-day.

Readers of "John Inglesant" will readily remember how at the climax of the story, and in perhaps the best piece of writing that the book contains, the murderer tells the tale of

¹ Hutton, "Sir Thomas More," pp. 30-35.

his conversion—how in trance he had seemed to be standing upon the Capitol one Christmas Eve, when to the sound of pastoral melodies the country folk were celebrating the Feast of the Nativity in the neighbouring Church of the Ara Cœli, and how suddenly the word went forth that a miracle had occurred and the real Christ in visible form reappeared amongst men:—

“He (Christ) came down the steps of the Ara Cœli,” the passage continues, “and the sky was full of starlike forms, wonderful and gracious; and all the steps of the Capitol were full of people down to the square of the Ara Cœli and up to the statue of Aurelius on horseback above, and the summit of the Capitol among the statues and the leads of the palace Caffarelli were full of eager forms, for the starlight was so clear that all might see; and the dead gods, and the fauns, and the satyrs, and the old pagans that lurked in the secret hiding-places of the ruins of the Cæsars, crowded up the steps out of the Forum, and came round the outskirts of the crowd, and stood on the fallen pillars that they might see; and Castor and Pollux, that stood by their unsaddled horses at the top of the stairs, left them unheeded and came to see; and the Marsyas who stood bound broke his bonds and came to see; and spectred forms swept in from the distance in the light, and the air was full of Powers and Existences, and the earth rocked as at the Judgment Day.”¹

There, in a modern reproduction very exquisitely finished, is to be heard the plea of Pico that the prophetic soul, not only of eastern mysteries, but of those very pagan gods whom Dante had styled false and lying (*falsi e bugiardi*) should find some sort of place or recognition on the outskirts of Catholic theology. And his idea proved to be in harmony with the

¹ C. xxxv.

genius of his country and the spirit of his time, and is to be read into Michelangelo's Sibyls in the Sistine Chapel and into Raphael's designs in the Camera della Segnatura, and deserves to be correlated with his own memorable saying that Philosophy seeks truth, Theology finds it and Religion possesses it.¹ For Italian Humanism instinctively sought to carry society smoothly forward, not by oppositions or by the over-emphasis of half-truths, but from precedent to precedent along the lines of a true evolution, reconciling and developing and repairing where an inferior intelligence might have preferred to destroy and remake.

Of such a tendency as this there had, it is important to notice, been a notable example in the ecclesiastical sphere about a quarter of a century before Pico was born and in the very city where he died. Actually in Florence there had been achieved in 1439 that reconciliation and reunion of the Catholic and Orthodox Communions which, far more justly than the capture of Constantinople by the Turks nearly fifteen years later, deserves to be regarded as the birthday of the nascent Humanities. So long as the frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli adorn the walls of the Riccardi Chapel and the faces of the Magi riding in from the East to Bethlehem recall the Byzantine potentates who in the fifteenth century crossed the sea to Italy, so long will no witness be wanting to one of the most œcumenical of councils. Constantinople could not have sent, nor Rome required a more representative delegation than Florence received. The Eastern Emperor and the Byzantine Patriarch alike were present, and though the latter died before the close of the proceedings, alike in principle concurred in the recognition of the Pope as "Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, Shepherd and Teacher of all Christians" and of his commission "to guide and rule the whole Church of God." The rights and privileges of the other Oriental

¹ *Philosophia veritatem quaerit, Theologia invenit, Religio possidet.*



NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

From an engraving by R. Morghen after the portrait by Bronzino.

Patriarchs were indeed preserved in the decree, but to that decree their delegates were assenting, whilst an imposing array of bishops—Bessarion of Odessa, Isidore of Kiev and others of less note—added dignity to the decision. Only Mark of Ephesus held out, one of those difficult dissentients sometimes to be found even in modern committees or conferences upon secular affairs. If, then, delegations are ever representative, if treaties are ever binding, if scraps of paper can ever seal well-considered settlements, if charity between Churches can ever issue in mutual comprehension and concession, the Council of Florence of the year 1439 must be esteemed one of the great reintegrating achievements of history. Unpopular as it was in the East amongst what we should call the die-hards of the day, the treaty held good so long as Constantinople continued free. The Greek authorities, ecclesiastical and civil, remained true to the contract they had signed; and the heir of Constantine was still in full communion with the successor of St. Peter when in 1453 the City of Constantine fell to the Turkish armies and the famous Church of Justinian was converted into a Turkish mosque. At the instance and in the interest of the Moslem invader, the old feud of the Greeks and Latins was then reopened; and the policy of Islam, playing upon the jealousy and cupidity of the Byzantines, thus cheated the work of the Humanities¹ and renewed the schism in the Church.

¹ Cp. J. B. Bury in the "Cambridge Modern History," I, p. 103. ". . . Though the Roman pontiffs of this period showed themselves able to rise to the higher conception of the unity of Christendom, the bigoted hatred existing between the Latin and Greek Churches went far towards paralysing the sympathies of the Catholic countries. Mohammed aimed at fostering this ill-feeling, and he was thoroughly successful; the supremacy of the infidel Sultan seemed more tolerable than the supremacy of the heretical Pope. Naturally Mohammed chose for the Patriarchate one of those who were opposed to the union of the Greek and Latin Churches. . . . After the fall of Trebizond (1461) the struggle between the Trapezuntine and the Constantinopolitan Greeks . . . made matters worse. A wealthy Trapezuntine named Simeon, compassed his own

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The Council of Florence remains, therefore, a memorable reminder of the fact that the East and the West were, spiritually speaking, at one, not a century before the Reformation began; and those who see in the city where that Council sat a symbol of the whole Italian Renaissance will feel the appropriateness of the scene to the act of Humanism thus accomplished. For Florence, with its burning thoughts and creative power, its tumultuous people and soft distances and azure skies, is the true capital of that culture of which Dante was the prophet and Pico the product. Rome by contrast, and indeed absolutely, is of eternal years; and to sit upon the hills of Rome is to see the long procession of Kings and Consuls, of Emperors and Popes, winding their endless way amidst the monuments of the growth, decline, fall and resurrection of Latin civilisation. But Florence, lily-wreathed, is of a day—a day indeed in the fullness of summer, both long and lovely, but a day that waned at last and was, as the Protestant Reformation showed, largely wasted on the world that had it.

The life of Thomas More synchronised with that gorgeous afternoon of Florentine history. He came into the world in fact just as the greatest of the Medici Princes triumphed over the Conspiracy of the Pazzi and became sole ruler of Florence; he reached manhood at the end of that short-lived sway of Savonarola, which saw the descent of Charles VIII upon Italy and the lilies of Florence mingling for a moment with the lilies of France; and he survived by a few months only the reign of the second Medici Pope, whose policy and proceedings had in different ways so greatly affected his own career. The city itself, it is true, he never saw, but that which it stood for could surely be read in Pico's writings, if not in Colet's eyes. A world of intellectual beauty, to

election by paying a thousand ducats to the Sultan; and this was the beginning of a system of unveiled simony. . . ."

which the patron of Holbein was not the man to be blind, was reflected there. For Art at that time was not content to remain impressionist, but strove persistently to pass behind sensation and, drawing the veil of circumstance aside, to show God as truly good and paint Nature as wholly fair. The Florence of 1500 spoke of that aim as in some measure already attained. Angelico had painted his celestial faces; Leonardo and Perugino their paradisal landscapes. Humanism had moved forward from the austere Baptistery of San Giovanni to the summit of Brunelleschi's Dome, from the masculine form of the Palazzo Vecchio to the lilyed loveliness of Giotto's Tower. Even supreme sorrow had attained exquisite grace in Botticelli's haunting, sad Madonnas; although time had some while still to run before the last and greatest of the sons of Dante was to set in the sacristy of San Lorenzo those brooding figures that speak to some of us of the weariness of Dawn and the glad repose of Evening, yet more still of the poet's soul in Michelangelo bursting beyond what stone or canvas have power to express.¹

The genius of Petrarch, that prime mover of the literary Renaissance, was likewise flowering now through all the city of flowers. The busy hum of Humanists was everywhere heard, some of them engaged in collecting manuscripts, others in reading and talking about books; and the elect spirits had been gathered by Cosmo the Magnificent into that new Florentine Academy under Gemistos Plethon, the Platonist, with whom, perhaps, after his chosen Pico, Thomas More might most gladly have spoken had time and place allowed.

The peculiar ethos of Humanism, as Jebb has pointed out²

¹ Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul that turns to His great love on high
Whose arms to clasp us on the Cross were spread.
(Michelangelo to Vasari, as translated by Symonds.)

² "Cambridge Modern History," I, p. 540.

and as it is essential to notice, came not from the Universities, "which indeed," as he observes, "for a long while were mostly hostile to it," nor from any flood of popular enthusiasm which could certainly never have guided it, but from the patronage of rich and influential men. Provoking to some minds and a platitude to others, the truth is that the ages to which we look for intellectual beauty have been periods, far less of democratic than of autocratic or aristocratic control. The Ages of Pericles and Augustus, of Elizabeth and Louis XIV, of eighteenth-century grace or "*Empire*" gilding, tell the same story as the age of the Medici—the story of a society pregnant with form and culture, because in respect of politics, temporarily at least, in repose. The Italy of the fifteenth century was a world intensely, preternaturally, simultaneously conscious of the claim of beauty—and even, if we do justice to the success of that great army of preachers who from S. Bernardino of Siena to Savonarola, covered the country, of the beauty of holiness. And of that Italy Florence was the face. The face perhaps of a woman; but of a woman, lovely, gracious and humane, and made to be the mother of male children! Look at it well, for it wears the impress of the Italian Renaissance both in its former and its latter phase. Consider it well, for the soul behind it is the spirit of Latin civilisation, from which with its charms or witcheries England, and great part of Europe, was soon to turn away. Vision will see it still, even if one half in dream, when in high springtide from the heights of Bellosguardo or Samminiato, the eye looks down on Florence. Time has not greatly marred the features of that queen of cities. Upon the bosom of her hills, in the winding-sheet of her river she sleeps in beauty; and the jewels that her sons have given her are hung about her neck. Not Athens, violet-crowned; not Rome in her majestic splendour; not Paris, mourning her lost imperial pomps; not London, charming after a manner that Londoners alone can know; not

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Oxford in all its ancient grace; no, nor any city of Christendom, though it be set high upon a hill, or spread wide across a plain or lie sweetly beside lake or river, is arrayed like this. The Renaissance lives again in its enchanted air. And, if much water has run beneath the Ponte Vecchio since More's mind dwelt on Pico, to stand there, or upon Ammanati's lovelier bridge beyond, is still to wonder what might not have been, if English thought had taken this way from the medieval to the modern world, instead of taking the road by Wittenberg.

VI

THE NEW KING AND THE NEW CARDINAL

It is a matter of fact that More entered the House of Commons in 1504, but it is a matter of conjecture for what constituency he sat and a matter for discussion what part he played there. Unless Roper and Stapleton are completely at fault—and this seems improbable—the line that More took in Parliament had the effect of estranging him from the Court for the rest of Henry VII's reign. The substance of his offence is said to have been opposition to a money-grant of "three-fifteenths" for the dower of Princess Margaret, lately married to the King of Scots; and it made things no better that he did in fact succeed in reducing the subsidy by so considerable an amount that Roper declares the King's demands to have been "clean overthrown." "We must muzzle this cornet of horse," complained Walpole, in a phrase that has become classical, of another young Parliamentarian two centuries later; and Henry VII would not appear to have wanted advice or disposition to muzzle, if not to make away with the beardless boy who had reduced his daughter's portion. More, it is true, was not Pitt nor master of Pitt's proud invective. For one thing he belonged to a profession that cultivates persuasion rather than command, and for another he lived in a period when Parliament was no sovereign power. But he was none the less formidable. In an age of poor speaking, when an indifferent vocabulary and a pitiful hesitation were the rule, he practised with assiduity, as the

Letters of Erasmus show,¹ the art of declamation. Yet no man of his time had perhaps less need of it. "I do not think," Erasmus declared in 1506, "unless the vehemence of my love leads me astray, that Nature ever formed a mind more pleasant, ready, sharp-sighted and subtle, or in a word more absolutely furnished with every kind of faculty than his. Add to this a power of expression equal to his intellect, a singular cheerfulness of character and an abundance of wit, but only of the candid sort; and you miss nothing that should be found in a perfect advocate."²

To muzzle the young man, who, perhaps, sat as a Burgess for the City, and was anyway protected by parliamentary privilege, was not so easy. The King, not to go altogether unavenged, visited the sins of the son upon the father, and put John More in prison, whence the good man only extricated himself by paying a fine of £100 into Henry's insatiable exchequer. And if Thomas could have been brought to admit his fault, he, too, might have been dealt with expeditiously and his confession used to obviate criticism. Fox accordingly spread a net to catch him, promising his restoration to royal favour which, so Dudley, the King's jackal, pretended to him later, would have taken the shape of the headsmen's axe. But honesty in his dealings and the hint of a good friend defeated these vulpine machinations, and no admission of guilt was made.

To the whole story, however, objections have been raised, as in truth they can be raised to some of the best-authenticated facts of history, not excluding, as Whately has demonstrated, the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte. No opposition in the Parliament of 1504 to a money-grant is, it is argued, elsewhere on record; no other Parliament had sat for seven years; and, for the rest, More does not seem, as might have been expected, to

¹ See on this Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 407.

² Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, pp. 406, 407.

have fallen from the good graces of two or three men of the first consequence about the Court. We may rejoin, if we choose, that records are not always full and friends not always false.

But let the matter rest, for life is fleeting. Something certainly occurred to cause More to leave England for abroad in the year 1508. It may have been pleasure, it may have been a passion to make himself master of the French language, in which already he was well taught, or it may have been, as Roper suggests, a fancy to be out of harm's way. Anyhow, he went, saw what Paris and Louvain had to show him in the way of Universities, and satisfied himself, like the good Englishman that he was, that neither at the one nor the other was so fine an education to be had as at Oxford or Cambridge. In one point, however, he gave high praise to Paris. In the teaching of Jacques Lefèvre the happiest minds and healthiest judgments recognised, so he declares, the restoration of "true philosophy, especially that founded upon Aristotle." And he adds that, if only the scholars both of Paris and Louvain would devote their attention to Lefèvre's commentaries on Aristotle's "Dialectic," their teaching would become less contentious and more precise.¹

This observation, which was only put on paper some seven years after the visit to which it refers, coincides pretty closely with the inception of the *Utopia* and gains some additional interest by showing that even when working the argent vein of Plato More was never in doubt that in Aristotle lay the golden ore. He had been always, perhaps, something of a bimetallist in philosophy, yet doubtless with an increasing sense, as life went on, that the gold standard had served the world too well to be lightly abandoned. Experience, meanwhile, was pouring in at a great pace; and the lover of wisdom and dreamer of dreams was becoming as much a

¹ See his letter to Dorpius, printed in Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," II, p. 222.

man of the world as a wisdom not of this world would allow of. In the incident in the House and the attitude there disclosed we catch sight of a soul taking ship to cross the broad ocean of public life—a soul sweetened by Christianity, sharpened by law, tempered by philosophy, and as firmly secured from the enticements of siren voices as if bound to a mast. In stillness, says Goethe's lovely line, is talent shaped, but character in the current of the world. With talent fully formed, More had matched himself against that threatening power of the Crown which in his time was to become, if it had not already done so, the strongest thing in the State, except only character itself. Already perhaps a shrewd eye might have guessed that, in this champion who was yet no courtier of the people, there lay the stuff out of which martyrs are made, though not out of which martyrs make themselves. Without, so far as we know, tramping those common forcing-fields of courage familiar to the sportsman, the athlete and the soldier, More seems to have arrived with a bound at the final hazard where a man has to prove his courage, not before sympathetic eyes but against sovereign displeasure. If Stapleton is right, he came, as we have seen, near losing his life over the business and, if Roper is right, he contemplated a life of exile. But the time of trial was not yet, for the reign was waning.

In 1509 the old King, too hard to be holy, too astute to be attractive, yet for all that as great a statesman as any of his Norman or Plantagenet predecessors, came to his end, leaving a great treasure of money and a great name for carefulness behind him. Like Louis XI of France and Ferdinand of Aragon, his contemporaries in time and his compeers in statecraft, he had made a united nation out of a miscellany of provincial passions and feudal feelings, so that his name stands as certainly at the end of the long, consolidating process of English political integration as the famous chapel that perpetuates his

reputation at the end of the immemorial Abbey where, symbol by symbol and stone by stone, the religious life of the English people had been engraved from its adolescence under the Confessor to its maturity under himself. To his son he left a great inheritance; and the new reign opened with as dazzling promise, perhaps, as any in English history. The succession was uncontested; the treasury was full; the young King was merry and much more. With his good looks and his good wits, his vigour and versatility, his love of sport and love of learning, Henry VIII had everything to recommend him to a people very ready to be pleased and not so difficult, as nations go, to be governed. And England in that hour gave its heart to one who was the heir of both the rival Roses, nor perhaps ever, for all the blood and thunder of the reign, quite took it again away.

Fortunate in his person and in his people, Henry was also fortunate on the whole in his counsellors and in every way in his wife. Archbishop Warham and Bishop Fox, diplomatists by profession as well as disposition, were of the Council; and with them were joined the Talbot who was Earl of Shrewsbury and the Howard who was Earl of Surrey. Lovell and Poynings added some further ballast to the boat, whilst Wolsey, already raised for his diplomatic services to be Dean of Lincoln and, as some have thought, one of the first twelve English statesmen in the course of ten centuries,¹ sat waiting his turn to pilot the ship of state into a new, perhaps less pacific ocean.

If the King had reason to be content with his grandmother's choice of advisers, he had still more reason to be satisfied with his own choice of a consort. The daughter of Isabella of Castille was not unworthy of her famous mother. She was a great lady and a good woman with all the making

¹ He was included in John Morley's famous "Twelve English Statesmen" Series.

of a devoted wife. Her looks were such that More declares in a letter contemporaneous with her coming into England that everyone is singing her praises and nothing wanting to her that the most beautiful girl should have;¹ and her wits were such that the eminent Vives, who was perhaps Erasmus's foremost pupil and too honest a man to flatter anyone, could call her "a most wise woman."² But in truth Henry was very well pleased with her; and this on no first acquaintance. She had been long in England as his brother's widow; and he had for long been almost, and at one moment quite engaged to her. Now of his own free will, though upon his father's dying recommendation, he married her, and with so much assurance that, as he wrote to her afterwards, if he were still free, he would yet choose her before all other women.

The world must have looked young enough on that June day of 1509 when the young King and Queen made their royal progress through London to be crowned at Westminster, and if the bridegroom was only within a few days of eighteen and the bride six years older, the difference was not beyond the power of love to bridge, nor any bar to children. Of these, in fact, Katharine bore her husband several, including a son who lived some weeks and the daughter who was to be Queen Mary. Call no man happy before you see the end, says, however, the warning adage—and, if no man, then certainly no woman. But for a time all went merry as the proverbial marriage bell; and More's compliments upon Henry's accession may still in their Latin dress be studied with profit by all who have a taste for irony and for Latin verse.

The change of Kings had changed the depressed fortunes of

¹ Br. Mus. MS. Arundel 249, fol. 85b (quoted Chambers "Thomas More," p. 81).

² Quoted in Foster Watson's "Vives on Education," p. lxxx.

the brilliant young barrister; and the City, if it was the City for which he sat, repaid his zeal and courage in Parliament by making him Under-Sheriff. It was a lucrative as well as an honourable office, carrying with it the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs in civil causes. Sitting only on Thursdays and in the forenoon, More rapidly acquired a great name for expedition, for uprightness and for liberality. His practice at the Bar, whether assisted or impaired by a disinterestedness so much beyond the standard of his own or any other time that he would not accept any brief in the justice of which he did not believe, had meanwhile increased, so that his income rose to £400 a year—a sum needing to be multiplied perhaps by ten, if it is to afford any measure of his wealth according to our standards. Election as a Bencher and twice over as Reader at Lincoln's Inn improved his professional standing further; and he made a considerable hit by his conduct of a case where the Pope was concerned to recover possession of a ship seized by the King's officers in Southampton Harbour. He was obviously a man marked for advancement; and in fact from this time on his intellect and his character seem to carry him forward from strength to strength, the one raising him to the highest office a subject could attain in the Kingdom of England, the other to a higher honour in the Kingdom of Grace.

* * * * *

The last great ecclesiastical Chancellor had, however, still to run his course before the first great lay Chancellor could come into his own; and the former was, in his way, very great indeed. Langton had been a very powerful man, and Beaufort, if Shakespeare is to be believed, a very worldly man, and Morton a very able man; but of all the Cardinals who have played great parts in English history, Wolsey stands out as perhaps the most powerful, and the most worldly, and the most capable. The most powerful, because one who was

Lord Chancellor of England and, as we should say, Prime Minister also; who was Archbishop of York and, which was so much more than being Archbishop of Canterbury, *Legatus a latere* besides; who controlled the processes of diplomacy, to say nothing of the operations of war; and who, in addition to all this, had become one of the richest men in England, had procured a concentration of power perhaps unparalleled either before or after! The worldliest, because at a time when moral leadership was all-important to his country he, a cardinal and an archbishop, remained content to frame his actions and policy to fit and further a worldly ambition! And also the ablest, because, though in his own way and for his own ends, he drew England from her shell and showed her something of her strength, and gave her such a place in diplomatic history as she had not before possessed, and initiated a policy which at long last in wiser hands than his own aided the cause of peace!

There is much in Wolsey's public character and career, if we study them closely, to recall a statesman of our own time and century; and we may perhaps come to a better understanding of him by comparing him a little with his antitype. Lord Curzon of Kedleston was not, it is true, an ecclesiastic; but neither was Wolsey, except for a few months after his fall when he took his archbishopric seriously, precisely a father in God. In both men, in fact, the love of what Bacon calls great place amounted to a dominant passion; and both pursued it with more assiduity than any statesmen of their respective generations, sacrificing for it not a little in the way of dignity and losing what better men prefer to keep. Their sense of moral values was, in fact, to say the best that can be said, undeveloped. They cared, perhaps, almost as much for pomp as they cared for power; and they cared so much the more to have that power autocratic. Their industry was untiring; their activity prodigious; their habit of mind imperious;

their thought imperial. They wanted England greater than they might themselves seem great; yet, if an element of egotism must be recognised in all their public service and if the complementary characteristics of arrogance and subservience were not absent from their personal relationships, it is but just to add that a certain grandeur of enterprise, as men judge things, stimulated and ennobled their endeavour, that a Roman pride of empire entered into a Roman purpose of dominion, and that it was with no mean conception of their country's destiny that their minds were filled. The pro-consular mentality, which in Curzon found its sphere in India, was in Wolsey turned towards an ecclesiastical situation calling both for political dexterity and discretion; and the plenary power of which, as *Legatus a latere*, the Cardinal contrived to become possessed shows, not only a boundless love of authority, but a statesmanlike belief that the solution of the problem of Church and State might be found in the transfer for practical purposes of the papal power to an English national enjoying at once the confidence of his sovereign and the prestige of a member of the Sacred College.

There was nothing, as he showed at the time of his fall, that Wolsey valued higher than this legatine commission, as there was, perhaps, nothing that Curzon surrendered with more regret than his rule in India. Yet in each case the conduct of another huge department of public business fills a large place in the story. Both men were in charge of foreign affairs at a great hour in European history, and both were actuated by the same desire to make England great by diplomatic skill. Each, however, was hampered in his effort by association with a vital and ruthless, rather than an experienced or sagacious personality; and each attained only a fluctuating measure of success. But the problem for both was the same one—the eternal problem of getting the German super-man to live at peace under the same roof with the *maîtresse femme* of European

civilisation. Of this something more will have to be said in due course. But, before we pass on, it may be worth while to notice how the comparison just instituted between the sixteenth- and the twentieth-century statesmen works out almost as well in taste as in temperament—how the mind which busied itself with Bodiam and Montacute resembles, if on a more modest scale, that which dreamt of Hampton Court and Christ Church.

Pomp, splendour, magnificence, a prodigality that spends itself in costly pageants of men and bricks and mortar—what solid glory it seems to the senses, and what brittle glory it proves to the soul! "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition. By that sin fell the angels." So wrote one who had taken stock of Wolsey's career from its former to its latter end. And More, who held in general that "to aim at honour in this world is to set a coat of arms over a prison gate," was of the same mind. Recalling at his own installation as Lord Chancellor the singular wisdom, marked experience, and long, prosperous fortune of his predecessor, he added, with dramatic brevity, that Wolsey had died "inglorious." He was himself to fall in due course from the same high office, but in so different a temper and with such difference of effect upon the spectator that the most cynical eye can hardly fail to become sensible of the truth of moral values. And, if we ask in what the essential difference between the two men lay, it is obvious to reply that in More's case ambition had been, not flung away, but always absent.

For the present, however, we have to think of Wolsey as he appeared in the year 1515, when he became Cardinal and Lord Chancellor and when More was first drawn into diplomacy. The world had at the time the look of renewing its youth and was in its royal houses becoming younger. In France Louis XII was gone; and Francis I, and all that

brilliant Court, alive with art and arms, of which he was the prince and patron, had appeared upon the stage. Meanwhile in Time's green-room Charles of Habsburg was waiting until his cue was called—until, that is, his grandfathers in Aragon and Austria made way for one who inherited not only Castile and Burgundy, but a title to be elected Holy Roman Emperor as much better than that of any rival as use and wont are stronger than unfamiliar things. He had not long to wait. Ferdinand died in the next year, and Maximilian three years after. By 1519 Charles was master in name, if not always in fact, of an empire that spread like a colossus across Central Europe, rested one foot upon Italy and another on Spain, and cast its shoe over the Indies.

"Let us enjoy the Papacy since God has given it to us," the light-hearted Medici is supposed to have observed when some few years earlier¹ he became Pope under the title of Leo X and, *mutatis mutandis*, the sentiment might have served to express the feelings of the three young sensualists—the capricious English leopard, the gay French dog, and the voracious Austrian eagle—who, like some ill-assorted trio of animals in one of La Fontaine's fables, were now called upon to give the law to a Europe peopled, like the confederation of Nature, by an assortment of hinds and panthers, lambs and foxes, wolves and apes and jackals.

Even, however, for such a satirist as Erasmus the prospect seemed at the time to hold much promise of a great age renewed and of golden years returning. And this was excusable enough. The young were doubtless everywhere feeling no less than usual that it was good to be alive; and one or more of Erasmus's English friends were feeding him with the optimistic nonsense that passes more often than it should do for political wisdom. "The heavens laugh," Mountjoy wrote to him at Henry's accession, "the earth exults, all things are

¹ In 1513.

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full of milk, of honey and of nectar."¹ Erasmus caught the enthusiasm, or something of it, and four years later, when the pacific Leo succeeded the warlike Julius in the Apostolic Chair, gave it an interesting expression.

"... Satiare with continual wars," he wrote in his "*Dulce Bellum Inexpertis*," "let the desire of peace a little move us. The Bishop exhorteth us (if ever any Bishop did, Leo the Tenth doth, which occupieth the room of our peaceable Solomon, for all his desire, intent, and labour is for this intent) that they whom one common faith hath coupled together, should be joined in one common concord. He laboureth that the Church of Christ should flourish, not in riches or lordships but in her own proper virtues. Surely this is a goodly act and be-seeming a man descended of such noble lineage as the Medici; by whose civil prudence the noble city of Florence most freshly flourished in long-continued peace. . . . Leo himself, having alway a sober and a gentle wit, giving himself from his tender youth to good letters of humanity, was ever brought up, as it were, in the lap of the Muses, among men most highly learned. He so faultless led his life that, even in the city of Rome where is most liberty of vice, was of him no evil rumour, and so governing himself came to the dignity to be bishop there, which dignity he never coveted but was chosen thereto when he least thought thereon, by the provision of God to help to redress things in great decay by long wars. Let Julius the bishop have his glory of war, victories and great triumphs, the which how evil they beseem a Christian bishop it is not for such an one as I am to declare. . . . But by peace restored now to the world, Leo shall get more true glory than Julius won by so many wars."²

¹ Nichols, "Epistles of Erasmus," I, p. 457.

² "Erasmus against War" (Introd. J. W. Mackail), p. 64.

Sanguine sentiments of scholarly middle age, but unfortunately less potent than the sanguinary instincts of soldierly youth already, or at least soon, to be seated on the great thrones of Europe! *Dulce bellum inexpertis*—war is sweet to those who have not tried it! About the time that Erasmus began to write his homily, Wolsey was giving Henry a little war in France; the French were scampering as fast as they could from a battle to which their urgent spurs have given its name in history; and the town and cathedral of Terouenne were vanishing off the face of the earth as a result of the indignation of the Emperor and the industry of the English. The English Leopard, in a word, like that nimble and bright-coloured beast which stands for worldly pleasure in the opening canto of Dante's "Inferno," was already showing his spots, whilst the young French Dog was soon to show his teeth. Despite Leo, despite Erasmus, despite their modern friends at Geneva, War remains, as one has named it, "the gambling of the gods";¹ and he who imagines that the spell of Cæsar and Napoleon has been broken knows but little of its strength. Henry, perhaps, liked it better in its spectacular effects than its incidents; but, however that may be, thanks to Wolsey, he was able to get his glory cheap. The Battles of the Spurs and Flodden, fought in the same year and each a victory, gave the English Sovereign some military prestige. And, whilst Henry enjoyed his youth—not, to be just, without doing a good deal of work between whiles—Wolsey turned these triumphs to diplomatic account.

The Cardinal was not a man of distant vision; and his diplomacy was directed rather to giving England a foremost place in European counsels than to the attainment of any substantial results. It was the argument in Bishop Creighton's study of him, that his policy turned upon the idea of a balance of power. Professor Pollard, in a more subtle piece

¹ Rosebery, in "Napoleon: the Last Phase."

of analysis, has shown that this notion, in so far as it entered into Wolsey's considerations, did so as the consequence of his attempt to keep English aims in line with Papal interests. Always and everywhere the Cardinal, remembering that he might one day wear the Triple Crown, calculated in Roman numbers. The system was not necessarily a bad one. The Papal and English Governments as exceptionally detached powers have more than a common interest in peace and order and, which is the same thing, have exceptional qualifications as trustees of a catholic civilisation. But Wolsey's policy was rather ultramontane than Catholic. He sought to divide and rule, not to make out of christian principles a law of nations; and he was for ever fishing in troubled waters, or trying to pull plums out of the international snap-dragon in the shape of some advantage or supposed advantage for himself or for his sovereign—a red hat or a papal crown, a province in France, a bishopric in Flanders, and as often as not a castle in Spain. His diplomacy was, moreover, crossed and at times confused by certain old English traditions—the commercial tradition of friendship with Flanders, lately renewed with Archduke Philip, though not to the satisfaction of the Flemings, and the dynastic tradition of goodwill towards Spain which had been exemplified in the King's marriage with Katharine of Castile and Aragon. These ties, partly formed by interest and partly by sentiment, were necessarily brought into closer connection and greater significance by Charles's succession to Spain as well as the Netherlands and by his ultimate election to the Imperial dignity; and not the least of Wolsey's mistakes towards the close of his career was his attempt, in sympathy with an ill-starred change in papal policy, to break them. It may well be that they even counted for something in the seconding and subsequent confinement of More's friend, the admirable Pace, of whose influence as secretary to the King the Cardinal

was undoubtedly jealous.¹ But, however this may be, it seems certain that an alien strand of foreign policy gradually strengthened the tangled skein of domestic failure which, tightening by degrees around the throat of the too-ambitious Minister, eventually strangled his administration and himself.

Few men were worse suited than More to approve Wolsey's policy. Temperamentally English, he tended to believe in diplomatic isolation and suffered, as many diplomatists have suffered since, from having to serve a foreign minister with whose views he was out of sympathy. He was first drawn into diplomatic life through his legal connections as under-sheriff of London. His friends in the City were anxious to see him made a member of the Commission which in 1515 was to go to Flanders to negotiate a mercantile understanding with the Government of the new ruler of the Netherlands; and this was done. He had doubtless excellent qualifications for the appointment—a judicial mind, a conciliatory temper, exceptional common-sense, linguistic attainments, besides a good acquaintance with the business in hand, which was the revision and renewal of the treaties of commerce concluded in the last reign for the exchange of English wool against Flemish cloth. Feeling between the traders in these commodities had lately run high. The Flemings had not apparently at the last agreement got as good value as they gave. *Intercursus malus* they had styled the treaty that had been torn from the ship-wrecked Archduke Philip in 1506, in contradistinction to the *Intercursus magnus* which had been the product in 1496 of a more liberal mood or a less tempting opportunity on this side of the Channel. Thus the English commissioners in Flanders found themselves decidedly ill-spoken of. Denunciations were even to be heard in church, and taunts in council; though in the end the business went well enough in spite of prolonged delays and

¹ See on this Pollard, "Henry VIII," p. 114.

provoking expenditure. For the cost of those six months' living was to More no trifling consideration. He lived in general more sparingly than most men, his drink for preference light ale or more usually plain water, his food rough bread and salted beef with eggs and fruit and presumably fish on days of abstinence. But no plain living could compensate him for having to keep up two households, one at home and one abroad, which as a married man he found unavoidable. For celibates, like his colleagues Tunstall and Sampson, the diplomatic service answered well enough; they took all their servants with them, fed at the King's expense, and were rewarded for their pains with good Church preferments. But for a married lawyer it was otherwise. As usual, however, More merely mocked at his troubles. "A liberal allowance," he wrote to Erasmus, "was granted me by the King for the servants I took with me, but no account was taken of those whom I was obliged to leave at home. And yet, though you know what a fond husband, indulgent father and considerate master I am, I have not been able to obtain from these latter such a trifle as to continue fasting for a time until I return."¹ Erasmus was in a position to sympathise. For him, too, financial stress was a constantly re-opening sore, which a pension of somewhat uncertain incidence from the excellent Warham alleviated, but did not wholly heal. More had hopes of obtaining for his friend a fat living from Wolsey; but Wolsey was more apt to fatten on livings himself than to provide them for meritorious scholars. Even in the case of his own illegitimate son by a young woman of the name of Lark, the Cardinal appears to have misappropriated most of the revenues (worth between £2,000 and £3,000 in the money of those days) of the thirteen benefices which he conferred, or caused to

¹ 17 Feb., 1516. Allen, "Opus Epist. Des. Eras.", II, No. 388. (Also in Nichols, II, ep. 396.)

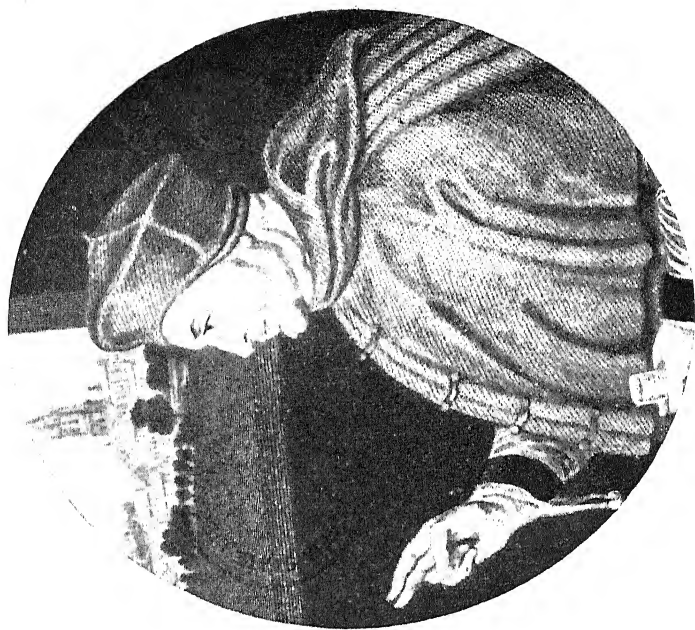
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be conferred, upon the highly educated but also highly extravagant youth.¹ This child of an incontinence which reflects not only upon the character of the Cardinal, but also upon the condition of the Church, the morals of the clergy, and the indifference both of the Public and the King, deserves mention here, if only because it gives us the measure of the problem with which men of goodwill had at that time to deal. Those of them who, like More, were moving in the great current of the world can hardly have been ignorant of the existence of the so-called Thomas Wynter, at any rate not after 1525, when the Cardinal forced this boy of something under twenty years of age upon the canons of Wells as Dean of the cathedral; and even ages as coarse as our own in all that touches sex and as shameless as our own in all that relates to matrimony can surely afford to cast a stone at a society so unblushing and a sin so eminently scarlet. When in the same year the King's bastard became Duke of Richmond and the Cardinal's Dean of Wells, whilst that King was decorated with the style of Defender of the Faith and that Cardinal dignified with the office of *Legatus a latere*, small wonder if critics have been tempted to declare that the whole head of English society was sick and the whole heart of the body politic faint. Medicine indeed was manifestly wanted and plenty of it; but here were physicians who knew not how to heal themselves.

Austere and fearless, a Savonarola in all but power and name, Colet was, of course, fully alive to the gravity of the situation; and his famous sermon before Convocation in 1512 lacked nothing in fervour of feeling and strength of language. "How much greediness and appetite of honour and dignity is nowadays in men of the Church!" he exclaimed. "All corruptness, all the decay of the Church, all the offences of the world come of the covetousness of priests."²

¹ See on this Pollard, "Wolsey," pp. 308-311.

² Lupton, "Life of John Colet," App. C, pp. 295-296.



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After the portraits by Holbein.

Such were the words of the preacher, Dean of St. Paul's. The Satirist had already spoken in that memorable *Encomium Moriar*—"In Praise of Folly"—which, mocking all manner of men, yet mocked the clergy most and drew from the good-natured Pope the mild rejoinder "I rejoice that our friend Erasmus finds a place for himself in his Folly."¹ But More, the best moralist of them all, upon whose name Erasmus had played to find the title for his book, did not place upon record his considered conclusions upon the matter until much later. We may, however, conveniently introduce them here.

"I wot well," runs the passage in his "Apology," "the world is so wretched that spiritual and temporal everywhere all be bad enough; God make us all better! But yet, for that I have myself seen and by credible folk have heard, like as ye say by our temporality that we be as good and honest as anywhere else, so dare I boldly say that the spirituality of England, and specially that part in which ye find most fault—that is, to wit, that part which we commonly call the secular clergy—is, in learning and honest living, well able to match and (saving that comparisons be odious) I would say further far able to overmatch, number for number, the spirituality of any nation Christian. I wot well there be therein many very lewd and nought; and surely, where-soever there is a multitude, it is not without miracle well possible to be otherwise. But now, if the bishops would once take unto priesthood better laymen and fewer, for of us be they all made, all the matter were more than half amended."²

This is but a quiet voice compared with the sweeping reproach of Colet's predication, the frolic fun of Erasmus's

¹ Nichols, III, p. 209.

² Eng. Works, p. 225.

piping, the strident blare of Luther's trumpet, or the rasping sound of Tyndale's harrow, though not for that any the less temperate, just, prudent or courageous. We shall not hear its whispers clearly yet; but we might do worse than train our ears to catch them before More begins himself to shout against the rising wind.

For already in 1514 even in England storm and whirlwind were upon their way, and the signs of their coming plain to the seeing eye. The strange case of Richard Hunne was such a portent. Here is such a tangled business as to make even Prof. Pollard declare that in respect of it "historical investigation almost rises to the level of detective fiction."¹ But, if the facts rise to that level, the findings fall below it. There is, indeed, murder done, or some appearance of it; and there is mystery enough. But the agent of death remains undiscovered and the riddle unresolved. To this day no one knows for certain who killed Richard Hunne—whether himself, or Joseph, the sumner, or Spalding, the bell-ringer, or Dr. Horsey, the diocesan chancellor, or these three in conjunction, or some person or persons still unknown. But Thomas More, who was at the time under-sheriff for the City, knew the matter, as he puts it, from top to toe, could boast that he had talked with all those best acquainted with the circumstances, except, as he adds characteristically, the dead man himself, and had been present, not only in Baynard's Castle, where it was examined by a special commission of lords spiritual and temporal, but also at Paul's where the corpse was tried for heresy. In a word, if any man's opinion on the case was worth having at the time, it was More's. To good conscience he added good information, and to good information the legal acumen of a rising lawyer of the highest ability. In a case which discovered something of the growing jealousy between the

¹ Pollard, "Wolsey," p. 32.

legal and clerical professions he was peculiarly qualified by his great regard both for good law and holy Church to do justice to the claims of either; and, beside his judgment on the affair, Tyndale's views have something of the look of a publicist's pamphlet, and Foxe's of an attorney's brief. He laughed, of course, for he knew life for far too grave a business to dare miss a single one of its jests; but also, as we shall see, there was, despite all the grim aspects of the affair, a good deal in the evidence to laugh at.

The leading circumstances of the case are not in dispute, even though some dates are a little in doubt and the reading of the riddle is so difficult. Richard Hunne was a London merchant of modest affluence, charitable dispositions, theological tastes and clerical antipathies. Of these last three characteristics the first was calculated to secure for him the sympathy of the people in any conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, the second to attract the unwelcome attentions of the Bishop of London's officers, and the third to exacerbate any dispute he might fall into with the parson of his parish. Such a dispute did unhappily arise in the course of the year 1514, and on an occasion when either pity or pride should have sufficed to check the quarrel. Hunne, it appears, had a child that died when no more than five weeks old and out at nurse, and that was buried, according to Foxe, in the parish of St. Mary Matsilon, which is presumably St. Mary Matfelon in Whitechapel. It is no great matter. The rector, one Dryfield, in accordance with the unattractive custom entitling the Church to be remunerated for its offices by a mortuary fee in the shape of the best article belonging to the deceased, claimed the baby's bearing-sheet. Hunne, instead of surrendering this melancholy relic with a shrug of the shoulders, denied the child's property in the thing, was sued by Dryfield in the ecclesiastical courts, and lost the case. Meanwhile a charge of heresy had been

preferred against him, though whether upon the priest's information or otherwise is open to discussion. There can, however, be little doubt that grounds, which went far beyond the prevalent opposition to tithe payments and mortuary fees, existed for suspecting Hunne of heresy; and in fact at his examination by the Bishop he admitted as much. His conversation had been more than critical of the spiritual powers that were; so much so, indeed, that, if his evangelical eye was not asleep when he read his translation of the New Testament, he should have suffered some pangs of self-reproach where admonished not to speak evil of dignities. His library, moreover, with its Wycliffite literature, was compromising; and the annotations in his books were more compromising still. And there was this besides, though it did not come to light until some years after his death, that, unless we have to do with a lying witness, he belonged to a heretical society that met secretly at midnight.¹ In these circumstances, with the law as it was and a religious opinion no less, as has been wittily said, than a political event, Hunne, pending his examination by the Bishop at Fulham, was not unreasonably clapped into the real "Lollards' Tower" which adjoined old St. Paul's.

Richard Fitzjames, to whom two of the buildings just named were beholden, St. Paul's for its embellishment, and Fulham Palace for its existence, was a prelate of conservative tendencies, but generally respected and, in More's judgment, very wise, virtuous and astute.² Whatever view we take of the whole affair, it seems clear enough that Fitzjames was incapable of anything infamous, and certainly of conniving at or concealing murder. But he had a difficult diocese to govern, was well aware of the unpopularity

¹ Engl. Works, p. 240.

² *Ibid.*, More actually says "cunning," not astute; but the word would nowadays convey what he clearly does not intend.

of the London clergy, and doubted the wisdom of Colet's courageous but too savage denunciations of the wickedness of clerks. Hunne, meanwhile, if More read his character rightly, considered how he might turn his troubles to account and invest his petty squabble with all the dignity of a constitutional case.¹ At all events, whether from vanity or vexation or some such idea of public duty as often gets mixed up with them, he decided to sue Dryfield by means of a writ of *praemunire* for infringing the jurisdiction of the royal courts. There was really no case here, and the charge all but frivolous. The ecclesiastical courts in England were perfectly valid and, if they were good for any decisions at all, they were good to sit in judgment upon disputes concerning mortuary fees. The object of Hunne's action was in fact to raise the whole question of the relation between lay and spiritual jurisdiction; and, had he succeeded, his name might have been passed down to posterity like Hampden's, either for praise or blame. But the Bishop wisely gave him rope; and he destroyed his reputation, if not himself. The examination for heresy was courteously deferred until the affairs of the bearing-sheet and the *praemunire* were settled; and only by a convenient confusion was it possible to make the two issues part of a common cause.

The inquiry was actually held at Fulham on the 2nd December;² and Hunne, though he would not consent to the precise wording of the charges against him, seems to have admitted that they were not without substance. He had, as we have seen, indulged in uncomplimentary and ill-advised remarks about the bishops and clergy, comparing them, if the allegations were accurate, to the scribes and Pharisees who crucified Christ, and adding other things to the same effect. There was certainly more of a case to be made against

¹ Engl. Works, p. 239.

² Foxe, "Acts and Monuments," IV, p. 183.

him than he had been able to make against Dryfield; and he had cause enough in his prospects for depression. Three days after his examination, he was found hanging in his room in the Lollards' Tower with his face turned to the wall.

It was the morning of Monday, December 5th, when the body was discovered; and a coroner's inquest was held the same day, though it did not perhaps conclude its labours until much later.¹ The twenty-four good men and true who constituted the jury are known to us by name; but of their intelligence we know nothing. They acted at any rate in an unexceptionable manner, repairing at once to the site of tragedy, where the corpse was still suspended, and, as we should say, reconstructing the scene on the spot. More than one circumstance suggested that Hunne's was no case of suicide and perhaps not even of hanging. The features showed no sign of agony; the soft silk girdle from which the body dangled was not knotted round the staple to which it was attached and, doubled round the neck of the corpse as it was, afforded no sufficient room for the passage of a head into the noose; the stool upon which the unfortunate man was supposed to have stood, was so ticklishly poised upon the bolster of the bed that it must have fallen in the course of any expiring struggles; and finally the wax-candle which stood some seven or eight feet from the body had been extinguished.

These things the jurors noticed, and also that something harder than silk had fretted the skin of Hunne's throat, and that there was "a great parcel of blood" in the corner of the room, and that two sanguinary streams had flowed from the left breast of the body. From these observations they came to the opinion that Hunne had been murdered; and it was reasonable enough that suspicion should in the first instance fall upon those who had him in close custody. Of these the

¹ Pollard, "Wolsey," p. 35 (footnote 3).

principal was Master William Horsey, the Bishop's Chancellor. Him therefore the jury charged with wilful murder, and together with him Charles Joseph, the sumner of his Court, and John Spalding, the bell-ringer at the Tower. There was certainly evidence which at first sight looked suspicious against all these persons, though of what value it was hard to say. Horsey, as the jury believed, had received back the keys of Hunne's prison from Joseph on the Saturday before the prisoner's decease, and had entrusted them to Spalding, who was reputed to be none too bright in the wits. Joseph, it seemed, had then ridden out of London on the Sunday morning and, though he got a procuress and a prostitute to swear an alibi for him, had returned secretly the same night. And, but presumably later in the investigation, Joseph, by that time committed to the Tower of London and perhaps of a mind to turn King's evidence, had confessed "of his own free will and unconstrained" that he and Spalding and Horsey had by the light of a wax-candle laid hands on Hunne in his bed, murdered him and then hung him up. The jury's conviction of the truth of all this might carry greater weight if they had not equally professed themselves satisfied that Horsey had before Hunne's death knelt before him in the Lollards' Tower, and with hands held up, besought the other's forgiveness for that which he had done and must do.¹ This, so the jury averred, was "well-proved." It seems, however, on the face of it, extremely improbable, and would mean, if it were true, that Horsey had been yielding to powerful exterior pressure. Whence such pressure could have come is far from obvious. The clergy, if they were, as Foxe and Tyndale would like us to believe, the villains of the piece, had already got the wretched Hunne firmly in their grip as a result of his heretical utterances; and it is almost inconceivable that any of them would have

¹ Foxe.

taken the risk of privately assassinating him whilst he stood so good a chance of being publicly executed.

On this account, if on no other, More regarded Horsey's complicity as to the last degree unlikely. ". . . I never heard," he observes, "the like before, that the Bishop's Chancellor should kill, in the Lollards' Tower, a man so sore suspect and convict of heresy, whereby he might bring himself in business; whereas, if he hated the man . . . he might easily bring him to shame, and peradventure to shameful death."¹ Suicide as an explanation had to his eye much more inherent plausibility, for it would in the circumstances have been in no way surprising if Hunne had wearied of life and in a spirit of revenge had taken it, hoping to make Horsey suspect. There is, in fact, something to be found even in the evidence taken by the coroner in support of this view. One of the Bishop of London's servants, according to the statement of a certain Creswell, a wax chandler, had volunteered that Hunne, upon being set in the stocks—and that there were stocks in the room of his confinement appears also from Foxe's woodcut—had demanded a knife, and explained the request by saying that he would rather kill himself than be thus treated.

The whole business, however, was, and is still, thoroughly obscure; and an important Commission eventually sat at Baynard's Castle to sift the matter to the bottom. It proved, however, much easier to expose human nature than to expose the truth. The comedy of human inexactitude fortified, as it does all too often, the tragedy of human doubt; but none the less the examination of witnesses provided excellent fun. Second sight at second hand reached, in fact, as far in 1514 as in 1914; and the people who gave evidence of the murder of Hunne in the former year were not a whit less credulous than those who attested the passage of a Russian army

¹ Engl. Works, p. 239.

through England in the latter. Examined in public by his master, one witness admitted to having got his information from another; and that other, being asked, declared that the first had misunderstood him, and that it was a neighbour of his, and not himself, who could, as the phrase went, take by the sleeve him that had killed Hunne. The neighbour was fetched, but even so it was no better.

“‘Nay, forsooth, my Lord,’ quoth he” (for the characters in More’s dialogues do really talk in the style of the story-books), “‘I said not that I could do it myself, but I said that one told me that he could do it.’” But when that one was found, it was still the same tale.

“‘Sir,’ they asked him, ‘know you one that can tell who killed Richard Hunne?’

“‘Forsooth,’ quoth he, ‘and it like your Lordship, I said not that I knew one surely that could tell who had killed him; but I said indeed that I knew one which I thought verily could tell who killed him.’”

Let the narrative continue yet a little, for after all we are getting, if not at the murderer of Hunne, at least at the table-talk of More.

“‘Well,’ quoth the Lords at the last, ‘yet with much work we come to somewhat. But whereby think you that he can tell?’

“‘Nay, forsooth, my Lord,’ quoth he, ‘it is a woman, I would she were here with your Lordships now.’

“‘Well,’ quoth my Lord, ‘woman or man, all is one, she shall be had wheresoever she be.’

“‘By my faith, my Lords,’ quoth he, ‘and she were with you, she would tell you wonders. For, by God, I have wist her to tell many marvellous things ere now.’

“‘Why,’ quoth the Lords, ‘what have you heard her tell?’¹

“‘Forsooth, my Lords,’ quoth he, ‘if a thing had been

¹ In the original “told.”

stolen, she would have told who had it. And therefore, I think she could as well tell who killed Hunne as who stole a horse.'

" 'Surely,' said the Lords, 'so think all we too, I trow. But how could she tell it, by the devil?'

" 'Nay, by my troth, I trow,' quoth he, 'for I could never see her use any worse way than looking in one's hand.'

" 'Therewith the Lords laughed and asked, 'What is she?'

" 'Forsooth, my Lords,' quoth he, 'an Egyptian, and she was lodged here at Lambeth, but she is gone over sea now. Howbeit, I trow, she be not in her own country yet: for they say it is a great way hence, and she went over little more than a month ago.' "

Here indeed, in More's phraseology, was "a great post well whittled to a pudding-prick." And there were other big posts to be similarly reduced before the inquiry was over. There was a King's Almoner's officer that was sure Hunne had never hanged himself. He had, so he said, "another insight in such things than other men had." What insight? they inquired. And so he explained that he had in the course of his business "considered many that had hanged themselves," and could therefore tell forthwith whether any had hanged himself or not. They asked him what signs he went by; but he said he could not well tell that, but that he perceived it with his eyes. And at that some few of the Commissioners could not refrain from laughing, for his eyes looked just as if they "would have fallen into their laps." Remembering, however, that a genuine jewel may be recognised at sight by good lapidaries, they did not hastily disbelieve the man, but examined still further his credentials. They put it to him that, if a hangman could not be sure in this matter, then his own experience must be insufficient. But he declared that, as officer to two almoners, he had had occasion to examine many corpses. How many? they asked him.

To which he replied he could not tell. So then they wanted to know whether he had seen a hundred; and he said "No." When they suggested eighty, he paused a little and ventured "Not fully!" Then they brought the figure down sharply to twenty, but now found him sure that he had not seen twenty, although he had hesitated as regards eighty. Upon that they tried him with fifteen; but once again his experience fell short of the test. And so it was, too, with the mention of ten, and of five, and of four. The vainglorious fool was by now desperate and, when they said "Three," he replied that he had seen that and more. Upon this they questioned him closely as to names and dates and places until under the interrogatory his swollen numbers shrank yet once again, and the many of his original statement were reduced to one. "Necessity," observes More, "drove him at last to the truth, whereby it appeared that he never had seen but one in his life. And that was an Irish fellow called Crook Shank, whom he had seen hanging in an old barn."¹

The resources of testimony were not yet exhausted. There was, it appeared, a "temporal man, in great credit for his truth and worship," that had an acquaintance, "a spiritual man," no less worshipful. And this layman, so he said, had heard from the cleric, who was known for a friend of Horsey's, that, if Hunne had not sued the *praemunire*, he should never have been charged with the heresy. So the Commission had the two up before them; and the divine was asked whether he stood by the statement attributed to him.

"'Surely, my Lords,' quoth he, 'I said not all things so; but, marry, this I said indeed that, if Hunne had not been accused of heresy, he would never have sued the *praemunire*.' Upon this the layman, good easy man that he was, was delighted, believing as he did that his statement had been fully corroborated. 'Lo, my Lords,' he cried, 'I am glad

¹ Engl. Works, pp. 236, 237.

ye find me a true man. Will ye command me any more service?'

" 'Nay, by my troth,' quoth one of the lords, 'not in this matter. . . . For I have espied, good man, so the words be all one, it maketh no matter to you which way they stand: but all is one to you, a horse mill and a mill horse, drink ere ye go, and go ere ye drink.'

" 'Nay, my Lords,' quoth he, 'I will not drink, God yield¹ you.'

"And therewith," continues More, "he made curtesy and went his way leaving some of the lords laughing to see the good, plain, old, honest man, how that as contrary as their two tales were, yet, when he heard them both again, he marked no difference between them but took them both for one because the words were one."

But it is time to bring this curious interlude and all the idle tales that hang about it to a conclusion. Nobody on whom the Commissioners could rely knew who killed Richard Hunne; and quite possibly he killed himself, in spite of the jury's scepticism. In any case, there was so poor a case against Horsey that the King stopped the proceedings, contrary, as More observes—and the remark is evidence that Henry's early dispositions were not altogether in opposition to his later ones—to his usual practice, for "never was there king, I believe, that ever wore the crown in this realm which hath in so many years given . . . so few [pardons]."² Meanwhile at Paul's on December 16th Hunne's wretched body had been tried and condemned for heresy, at a meeting—variously adjudged to be a sitting of convocation or a synod of the diocese³—where the Bishop of London took the chair, and at which the Mayor and Aldermen of the City and, which was perhaps of more consequence, Bishop Ruthal of Durham,

¹ *i.e.* requite.

² Engl. Works, p. 238.

³ Pollard, "Wolsey," p. 34 (footnote).

the King's secretary and, as some have thought, also the Cardinal's jackal, assisted. Thus were Hunne's views, perhaps in themselves and strictly speaking rather temerarious and seditious than actually heretical, sent up in smoke and his remains reduced to a pile of dust. But this was by no means the conclusion of the whole matter. If the body of the London merchant was now no more than ashes, his soul went marching on, gathering to itself much of the formless matter of public opinion which knows not whence it is or whither it goes, but fastens, like eddying dust, upon some moving object.

The clergy, it seems at this point in place to remark, could have had no privileges nor power at all, if these had not first been accorded them by their fellow-citizens in the State. Their peculiar position, their recognition as a separate estate of the realm, their immunity from lay jurisdiction, had all been won in the first instance by rare qualities and services—by a wisdom and counsel beyond the reach of their lay contemporaries and by examples of moral courage that went far towards the making of civilisation. In all clerical privilege there is latent a tribute of brute force to moral virtue and of ignorance to education. But privilege, though very necessary to, and indeed inevitable in human society, needs to be perpetually justified. The pre-Reformation clergy, as the Reformation showed, were for the most part cast in no heroic mould, and did in their time much what the Vicar of Bray exemplified for all time, in the way of shifting their tenets as circumstances enjoined. For this the Bishops were doubtless chiefly to blame. The old saying, *Episcopi in Anglia semper pavidī*—Bishops in England, always timid—was perhaps never more to the point than in the opening of the Tudor Reformation. But, however that may be, it is clear at any rate that the clergy, from one cause or another, had lost caste, and that no longer, as in the time of him whom the

old English venerated as St. Thomas of Canterbury and the Reformers decanonised into Becket, did the nation see why clerks accused of crime should be allowed to plead benefit of clergy. Parliament, indeed, would have been content with a very reasonable compromise, and proposed that privilege of this kind should not extend to minor orders; for it was among the possessors of these orders that the criminals complained of were largely recruited. The Bill, however, in which this principle was embodied was fiercely contested by certain clericals as being opposed to divine as well as to ecclesiastical law; and this view seemed to receive countenance from certain general observations of Leo X at the recent Lateran Council,¹ though in fact the Pope, as the Bull of Feb. 1515-16 discovered,² was well aware of the misconduct of the English minor clergy. Eventually the measure was dropped, and, at Wolsey's instigation, the Pope suspended all English ordinations which stopped short of the sub-diaconate. It was a sensible solution in its way, but more was wanted than the abolition of a gross abuse here or the demolition there of a monastery. It was not so much a house that needed to be set in order, but a priesthood that needed to recover its first love, and in this Wolsey, loving as he did this present world, was incompetent, though he had taken all the ecclesiastical leadership to himself, to give any lead. Consider him once again as he adds benefice to benefice and bishopric to bishopric. Let Wolsey hold what Wolsey held, and ever more besides, might well have been his motto; for still the tale of his magnificence multiplies. Standing high exalted at the head of his Order, he exemplifies all that is essentially alien to it, all that men hated and feared and envied in it; and this in the day of its visitation. Even in 1515 the Lion had begun to stir in his lair. Mark

¹ See Maitland, "Roman Canon Law," p. 89.

² See Rymer's "Foedera," XIII, pp. 532-3.

how Wolsey is compelled to kneel that autumn before the King to obtain the pardon of the clergy, because the Sovereign misliked their treatment of Dr. Standish, when he maintained that the recent, provisional revocation of "benefit of clergy" in the case of clerics under the degree of Holy Orders was right enough, whatever councils or canons might say to the contrary. The Cardinal, had he been less of a courtier, might have heard the tocsin of a reformation sounding through that storm-laden air. He heard it not.

VII

THE UTOPIA

IT was during his six months of enforced residence in Flanders that More conceived the idea of the "Utopia." "In all my travels," he wrote to Erasmus, "there was nothing I liked better than my intercourse with your host Peter Giles . . . a man so learned, witty, modest and so true a friend that I would willingly purchase his company at the cost of a great part of my fortune." Peter Giles, the town-clerk of Antwerp, was indeed a very pleasing product of the Humanist Renaissance; and those who care to see him as he was may find his likeness still, holding More's letter in his hand and with a bunch of books about him, upon the walls of Longford Castle. But for us, his pleasing, intelligent face peers out of the pages of the "Utopia" only as part of that delectable dreamland into which its author admits us through gates formed as well of ivory as horn.

It was in the autumn of 1515 and as he came out of Our Lady's Church at Antwerp, which is also the Cathedral and, as he notes, fairer, more splendid and more curious than its sisters, that More walked, or supposed himself to have walked, into this world of vision. His guide was just such an one as three hundred years later drew Coleridge—whether in the body or out of the body who can say?—over chartless seas and showed him mysteries neither of heaven nor hell, but of a middle-distance between them—an ancient mariner, in fact, who had been westward bound and had wandered far into a land of wonder beyond the Spanish Main, and whose sunburnt skin, long beard, and cloak carelessly disposed

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around him told of an odyssey. Seen first in conversation with Peter Giles at the moment when More met him, the figure of Raphael Hythloday slips thus speciously into the story, materialises, and mixes with the flesh and blood of his two companions as convincingly as if he had really crossed the ocean which for that age and generation held all the hidden pearls of adventure. As, after exchanging a few courteous commonplaces, the three men move off to the turfed benches in More's Flemish garden, can we not see him still—that travelling companion of Amerigo, that friend in some pre-natal state of Plato, that seer of dream-cities that seem to lie upon the shadowy confines of human conditions and to perish in the light of common day?

It was a good story that Hythloday had to tell, when the talk had got going; but it entered the conversation as by a side-way, and was free from that hint of instruction which is the undoing of a traveller's tale. The three had just been talking about present discontents and political remedies, about good laws and judicious ordinances, and Hythloday had displayed so wide a knowledge of these matters that Giles could not forbear to ask him why he had not taken service with some king or another, in view of the obvious opportunities that would be thus afforded him of using his talents, improving his fortune and assisting his friends. He answered that, as for his kinsfolk and acquaintance, he had already made provision for them; that, as for his fortune, it was already sufficient; and that, as for his talents, he had no desire to enslave them. He preferred, in short, to be his own master.

In vain did Giles press the distinction between servitude and service.¹ Hythloday would have none of it. The man, as it now appeared, was an idealist. He detested war; and princes, so he said, took delight in it. He wanted to throw

¹ Servire and Inservire.

his mind into the common stock; and kings' counsellors were always pitting their brains against each other in the pursuit of power. And, besides, he was bored by the conservatism of human nature which always tended in the last resort to maintain that nothing could be improved upon and that the ancient ways were the best to walk in.

The turn which the talk had now taken led Hythloday to speak of a conversation that he had once had at Cardinal Morton's table; and More heard him so much the more gladly that, as we know, he had himself been an inmate of the Cardinal's household. It appeared that a clever lawyer who was Hythloday's fellow-guest on the occasion referred to, had taken occasion to comment both on the merits of resolute government and rigorous justice and upon the disappointing results they sometimes yielded. Thieves, he observed, were hanged, perhaps twenty together on a gallows; and yet felonies continued. Whereupon the fire had kindled in Hythloday's mind. Knowing that Morton liked a man none the worse for speaking his thoughts out boldly, he had retorted that theft was no subject for capital punishment and that, if a man had no means to live, he could not be censured for stealing and risking to die. The lawyer replied that men could earn their living well enough, if they chose, in shop or field. But Hythloday was in no mood to let off his opponent lightly, the contrasts between wealth and poverty being too savage to be stomachied, and the case of the mutilated and superannuated survivors from the recent wars being by no means met by any such general argument. He could not away with the idle rich and their train of idle followers; and he grew eloquent as he denounced the iniquity of training-up braggart serving-men to roister through the streets and of casting them subsequently adrift without employment when their master had died or they had themselves fallen into decrepitude.

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The Man of Law was not, however, yet at the end of his resources. Of such stout stuff as serving-men, he said, were soldiers made, and we must prize them on this account above artisans or labourers. Hythloday thought the fellow intolerable. You might as well say at once, he rejoined, that one must foster thieves for the sake of warfare. The whole thing was a piece of tomfoolery and poisoned the life of other countries as well as England. A lot of soldiers and serving-men were kept with nothing to do; and then wars had to be made to provide them with employment. Wealth did not consist in unproductive exercises; and ploughmen and craftsmen would give quite as good an account of themselves, if it came to blows, as pampered retainers. And then he added that this was not the only reason there were thieves in England; another cause might be adduced for that.

The Cardinal had sat all this while listening, but at this point interjected an inquiry. What, he wanted to know, had Hythloday got in his mind? The traveller told them at some length. What it all came to, however, was simple enough. Pasture land was being preferred to agricultural, and the labourers were losing their living to the sheep. Not content with their parks and their chases, the magnates, both lay and clerical, were enclosing the glebes, razing the villages and turning adrift those who lived off them and in them. One shepherd would displace perhaps a score of husbandmen. Exiled from their homes, the wretched agriculturists had to dispose of their household goods for almost nothing and take their choice between begging and stealing, with gaol or the gallows at the end of the road. Meantime the magnates were busy making corners in cattle and sending up the price of wool and mutton.

The loss from this cause of the ancient felicity of England had been further aggravated, so Hythloday maintained, by a simultaneous increase of self-indulgence or worse in the

inhabitants. The poorer classes were bitten with a desire for fine clothes and high living, for strong drinks and ladies of light reputation, for games in general and for games of chance in particular. All these attractions wasted, he said, their wasting substance the quicker. And he concluded by declaring that the remedy lay, as he had indicated, in the suppression of monopolies and the return of land to cultivation.

The lawyer, after complimenting the traveller a little patronisingly upon his extensive acquaintance with English conditions, began to gird himself for a detailed reply. But he had no sooner outlined his intentions than the Cardinal cut him short by observing, with characteristic bluntness, that the opening of his speech was too prolix to allow of its further development. In point of fact, what had interested Morton was not so much Hythloday's reflections on the state of England as his criticism of death as a punishment for theft; and on this point he desired his visitor to explain himself more fully. Hythloday was nothing loth. He began by saying that money and men's lives were incommensurate; and then, turning the churchman's flank adroitly, he argued that the law of a Christian State could not, as in this case, possibly outstrip in harshness the law of Moses without violating the divine commandment not to kill. There was, besides, a practical consideration. If his legal position in no way deteriorated by adding murder to theft, a robber had the best of reasons for extinguishing his victim's witness. The sensible way, he declared, to punish thieves was to make bondsmen of them, setting them to work in mines or quarries or hiring them out at low wages as day-labourers. Badged and clothed and clipped about head and ears in such a manner as to make marked men of them, forbidden to carry arms or to possess money, confined to specified localities and menaced with death if they ventured to transgress these regulations,

they might still enjoy, as in Persia, where Hythloday had seen the system in operation, the saving hope of ultimate liberation, if they bore themselves well and patiently.

The lawyer shook his head and made a grimace as Hythloday ended. No plan of this kind, he said, would be safe in England—and to this the most part of the company signified assent—but, mindful of the snub he had got from the Cardinal at his last intervention, he added nothing further. His reticence proved to have been judicious; for Morton immediately observed that the matter merited experiment and might very well be tried in the case of vagabonds as well as thieves. There was, after all, no difficulty in reverting to the existing method if the result of a change proved unsatisfactory. Upon that the opinion of the company veered round, and it appeared that, in the judgment of his hearers, the Cardinal had spoken with excellent good sense.

The discussion became more general and began to abound in absurdities. A funny fellow who picked up his living by such social service as can be rendered by sneers and gibes, and who would now and again hit a bull's eye more by luck than skill, remarked that, whilst robbers and beggars had been dealt with, the sick and aged still remained on their hands. He confessed that he had taught these to bother him no more by giving them nothing, sometimes through disinclination and sometimes through inability. They now left him, he added, as severely alone as they did any monk or priest; and he for his part would bestow them as lay brethren or as nuns in houses of religion. The Cardinal smiled good-naturedly at the sally, whilst a Friar, with a long face and a degree in divinity, showed keen appreciation of a thrust that left his own Order unpierced. 'We begging friars,' he said archly, 'must be provided for also.' 'You have been already,' said the wag, 'for we have arranged to put vagabonds to work, and you friars are the greatest vagabonds of the lot.'

Everybody laughed at this except the Friar, who was furious and at once grew abusive, covering his enemy with imprecations, comparing himself to Elisha, declaring his wrath to be righteous, and invoking some papal bull that laid penalties upon such as made game of Franciscans. So angry was the good man that he could by no means be placated; and the Cardinal was compelled at last to motion to the too-jocular gentleman to leave the room and himself to change the conversation.

At this point Hythloday paused, apologising for the length to which his reminiscences had run. Originally intended just to show More and Giles how hard it was for a man of his sort to get a hearing amongst courtiers even for ideas that had caught the attention of the Lord Chancellor, he had talked on under the influence of More's encouragement. For More, loving jests and humours and the swordplay of mind with mind, had, it appeared, enjoyed every word of the conversation, whilst tales of Morton, to whom he had been devoted, gave him all the pleasure in the world. It was no wonder that he took a great fancy to the stranger and pressed him with fervour to remember what Plato had urged in regard to the amalgamation of philosophers and kings and to turn his brains to practical politics. Hythloday, however, was immovable. A philosopher, he said, was quite out of place in the counsels of the Kings at that time reigning. What credit, for example, would he get if he were to recommend the King of France to let Italy alone and to negotiate an Anglo-French understanding, unless at the same time he advised an intrigue with the Scots for an attack upon England? Or how would his advice be received, he pursued, if he spoke out his mind in the King's Council and declared that wars did not pay and that the costs of peace were more worthy of a sovereign's attention? "Not very thankfully!" More was constrained to admit; and Hythloday pressed his

advantage. To what purpose, then, was it in existing conditions to protest against tricks being played with the coinage, or against a pretence of war being got up as a pretext for fresh taxation, or against the revival of obsolete statutes so as to extract fines from unwitting violators, or against the sale of monopolies, or the corruption of judges, when all these things could be made so wonderfully profitable to His Majesty's treasury? Who would believe him if he were to argue that the wealth of the king lay in the common wealth of his people, or were to quote the saying of Fabricius that it was preferable to rule over rich men than to be rich oneself, or were to instance the example of the Macariens, whose sovereign swore at his accession that he would have no more of a treasure than a thousand pounds in gold and silver?

The argument was forcible; and More admitted its force. To beat the philosophy of the schools into the hard heads and harder hearts of the politicians appeared, indeed, a hopeless undertaking. But there had also to be considered, he urged, the philosophy of expediency, which attempts no more than is opportune. The best may be the enemy of the better, and craft must prepare the way of improvement. He concluded with gentle irony. "It is not possible," he said, "for all things to be well, unless all men are good; and that I think will not be for a good many years yet."

Hythloday, however, was quite unmoved. In his philosophy there was no room for diplomatic compromises; and he poured scorn upon the ingenuity of the "sly and wily" divines, who, apparently in accord, as he observed, with More's recent counsel, had contrived to effect an accommodation between the precepts of the Gospels and the way of the world. Plato had spoken more wisely where, recognising the madness of the many and the helplessness of the just man in face of it, he conceives the part of the philosopher to lie

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in avoiding the storm and dust of public life and communing with men of like mind with himself. At the root of the business, however, as Hythloday went on to admit, there lay an irreconcilable difference between his ideas and those of the world with which in Europe they had to deal. But he had gone beyond Europe and had seen Utopia. And for himself he concurred with the Utopians and with Plato in believing that no healthy state could be established without community of goods. The principle of private property, involving as it seemed to him the exaltation of mammon as the measure of all things and the allocation of wealth exclusively to the few—and those few as unproductive as they were rich—and of poverty to the hard-working and in general more profitable many, was destructive of happiness.

More replied that he was not at all of this opinion, for the simple reason that a man produces wealth from egoistic rather than altruistic motives and, if denied the rewards of his labour, would be in a state of continual revolt. But he was assured by Hythloday that he would have come to think otherwise, had they been together in Utopia, where the principles he distrusted were embodied in the law and custom of the country. At that More pressed the traveller to give a full account of his travels. But Hythloday, in spite of his disclaimer, showed himself a cunning propagandist, insisting that they must dine before he could begin to talk; and it was not until they returned to the garden-bench after dinner that he could be persuaded to take up his parable. It appeared that he had started his voyage in company with Amerigo Vespucci, but, when that famous merchant-adventurer turned homewards, had decided to remain and push his way further forward. Assisted by a local potentate with supplies, a guide and some introductions, and accompanied by four companions, he had pressed on into the interior of the Continent and, after traversing one region full of populous

cities and another infested with nothing but serpents and savages, had come in the end to a civilised country and a sea-port town that was a great centre of shipping. The seamen there were remarkably expert, but still unacquainted with the lodestone; and the present of a compass brought them to the explorer's feet. On the strength of the service he had rendered them, Hythloday thus obtained the freedom of their ships and took advantage of it to travel farther. Among the other countries that he visited was Utopia. Just where this lay, however, More, absorbed by the account of its institutions, forgot to inquire; and all that he could put on record with a view to its subsequent localisation amounted to no more than a description of its features.

The place, it seems, is an island, fortunately cut off by nature and artifice from the neighbouring mainland. Across it there runs a river—the Anyder—of which the waters are strongly salted by the sea at the influx of the tide and return sweet for bitter at the swift ebb backward in a manner curiously suggestive of the Thames between Chelsea and the Channel. Upon the banks of the Anyder stood the capital in whose name—Amaurote, the dim city—may perhaps be detected some suggestion of fog in the neighbouring valley, or some reference to the general obscurity that covered its actual position in common with that of the other three and fifty fair cities which were the pride of the land. Be that as it may, there was sufficient sunshine about to raise a handsome crop of fruit and flowers. It was, in fact, a garden-city that Hythloday saw, where every man contended pleasantly with his neighbour in husbandry; and the beauty of the gardens was proof enough that gardening had seemed to the founder of the city, centuries before Bacon was to phrase the thought, to be “the purest of human pleasures.” By virtue of it the backs of the houses were rendered beautiful; but also the houses

in themselves, so Hythloday reported, looked "gorgeous and gallant," trimly placed in rows as they were and fronting upon wide streets, besides being well-built in flint, brick or plaster, flat-roofed, well-proportioned to their three-storied elevation, and for the most part fitted with glass-windows.

A dream-city it must have seemed to More as Hythloday rebuilt it in imagination, with its amenities—green orchards and gay gardens and gleaming water, all picturesquely inclosed by an outer wall, standing four-square and set with battlements. But, then, they were an extraordinary people with whom Hythloday had fallen in. One needed to look no farther than their domestic arrangements to discover that they could be rational to the finger-tips and unromantic to the toe-nails. They married only after the two parties to the affair, suitably attended by a duenna, or, in the man's case, by her male counterpart, had in turn exchanged apparently unblushing stares in a state of nature, so that each was fully apprised of all the beauty, if so it chanced to be, or, by ill hap, of the defect of beauty in his or her prospective partner. The plan had the advantage of eliminating a whole category of subsequent complaints; and, though both adultery and intolerable waywardness in husband or wife were reluctantly admitted as grounds of divorce, no plea founded in one way or another upon the growing unattractiveness of a consort's looks was ever entertained.

The same spirit of calm calculation reappeared in the manner in which the Utopians enlarged and reduced the size of their families. Whilst there were no regulations respecting the number of children under fourteen, every family was required to contain at least ten children over that age, but no family was permitted to retain more than sixteen. Children were consequently shifted about from household to household and city to city as these requirements

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prompted, that is as soon as they became adolescent.¹ The numbers of the town-population, moreover, were as carefully prescribed as those of the family group. Each town must contain 6,000 families; and these furnished the framework of an electorate and a government. Every thirty families had the duty of choosing a philarch; and the 200 magistrates thus chosen elected in their turn a prince from among four candidates sent up by the four quarters of a city. Assisted by a council, the prince exercised his office for life, subject only to the penalty of deposition if he became tyrannical; but the rest of the magistrates, both great and small, had to submit themselves for annual election.

Life in Utopia was reduced to terms almost as simple as those of government. Everybody, without exception, learnt farming and some other handicraft into the bargain—the trades of the blacksmith, the clothier, the carpenter and the mason representing the four cardinal professions. Fashions were eschewed and, as no shadow of change ever again varied the shape of garments once for all differentiated so as to distinguish a male from a female and the married from the single, it became a simple matter to make them all at home. Rationality had, in truth, made such good progress that no one could perceive any reason for preferring a fine-spun garment to a coarse one. Utopia had consequently no use for well-dressed men or women, taking as it did all freaks of fashion and symbols of honour for “a marvellous madness.”

The Utopian working-day—and everybody worked—was divided with exactitude. Three hours' labour was done before noon and three more after it. In the middle there was a break of two hours for a meal and a siesta. Supper followed the completion of the six hours of labour, and then came some

¹ This arrangement would not have seemed as surprising in the sixteenth century as it does now. Both boys and girls were constantly planted out. (See Gairdner's introd. to the Paston Letters, pp. ccclxix-xxi). The 'household of Sir Thos. More' was doubtless so much the more astonishing.

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form of recreation in garden or hall according to the season. Again, pure rationality governed these amusements. There were no games of chance; and the choice lay between music, decent conversation and a sort of chess, either arithmetically or ethically conceived, where one member would contend with another or a company of vices band themselves together, sometimes with edifying effects, against a like company of virtues. An hour devoted to these entertainments sufficed; and with eight o'clock came bedtime.

At four the next morning the Utopians were stirring again, with some hours in hand before the working-day began. The unintellectual ones spent this time in homely occupations, the "high-brows" in improving their minds by lectures. There was no compulsion, except indeed for those who had made learning their profession. These elect persons, however, needed to be up and doing; for their licence to exchange labour for learning might be withdrawn again if they disappointed expectations. There were some 500 of them to be found in each city—citizens told off on the recommendation of the clergy and with the approval of the magistracy to supply the learned and liberal professions and recruited on a basis of merit, and not of privilege, from the whole population.

With all but these engaged in productive labour, a six-hour day more than sufficed to fill the markets of Utopia with abundance. In the market-place at a stated hour stewards, each representing the needs of thirty families, were to be found collecting provisions, subject, however, to a priority accorded to the stewards of the sick, who were lodged just outside the city in four spacious hospitals, oddly reminiscent of the four great London hospitals appropriated by the King at the Reformation.¹ Then, when all was

¹ St. Bartholomew's Henry returned under pressure to the metropolis, but with his name attached as its founder; and St. Thomas's was recovered

ready, a trumpet summoned the thirty families of each district to a public meal in the common hall and, though it was possible to eat in private, the stigma of bad taste, reinforced by the dread of bad cooking, confined this practice to cases of necessity. The company collected in the common-room was grouped in messes of four, drawn evenly from both sexes, but each mess of old people was relieved by the juxtaposition of a mess of young ones in its immediate neighbourhood. Bondsmen, recruited apparently in sufficient numbers from among the gaol-birds of Utopia and the gallows-birds of the countries around, and assisted by "vile drudges" volunteering from over the border for the purpose, did the base work of the establishment under the direction of the ladies of the land. Children who were old enough gave aid in waiting; but young children were prudently consigned with their nurses to a place apart. For the rest, the mid-day meal was kept short, whilst the suppers were longer. A lection salted the beginning of both; and music and perfume sweetened the course of the latter.

For the Utopians, it appeared, were all for pleasure, if no harm seemed to come of it, regarding it, indeed, a little to Hythloday's surprise, as the chief ingredient in human happiness. This epicurean philosophy of theirs was, like everything else about them, carefully considered, and in truth derived from the tenets of a religion by no means other than austere. They argued in this way. If there were no God, and man were not an immortal soul, no one could in their judgment be so foolish as not to take pleasure wherever he found it and in whatever way he could get it. But, since God, as they held, exists, and with God the principles of reward or retribution in a future life, it became necessary to distinguish between innocent and noxious pleasures and to

from Edward VI (see on all this R. W. Chambers, "Thomas More," pp. 259, 260).

inquire which are and which are not in conformity with virtue. The essence of virtue they found, as the Stoics had done, to consist in living according to nature; and what precisely that signified reason was there to discern. But at this point their doctrine took an unexpected twist, and one not usually associated with stoicism. Reason, they observed, moves us to make others enjoy themselves and to prompt them to mirth; and what it moves us to do with others, it must equally enjoin us to do with ourselves. For either a joyful life is wrong, and then we ought not to help others to it; or else it is right, and then we are in duty bound "to live merrily" ourselves, provided only that gaiety does not become a cloak for selfishness. Of the two alternatives they elected for the latter, displaying their liking for merriment amongst other ways by a great love of fools who thus formed an essential feature of their community.

The philosophy of the Utopians was firmly poised. Every state of mind or body that caused "delectation" was, they held, pleasurable. The mind drew its happiness from the use of intelligence, the exercise of virtue or the recollection of good deeds done; the body—and this is a point they had most carefully considered—from the condition of "steadfast and quiet health." It followed that they regarded the pleasures of the table as entirely desirable, in so far as these contributed to that state, and gratefully recognised the beneficence of Nature in causing the pangs of hunger and thirst to be satisfied with things pleasant, and not unpleasant to the palate. Asceticism had consequently no place in their philosophy, and they were incapable of understanding how people could be so unreasonable, not to say mad and cruel, as to injure their beauty or impair their strength by fastings or mortifications unless these promoted in some tangible manner the welfare of others. Utilitarian in all but name, they were of opinion that the last word in wisdom

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had been found in the pursuit of pleasure conditioned only by the claims of altruism; whilst, nevertheless, like Simmias in the *Phaedo*, they kept a good outlook for some word of God to teach them something truer still. For the existence of God was to them a self-evident truth so obvious that, though they held it beyond a man's power to believe what he wished and therefore permitted no coercion in such matters, they excluded from public employment, as holding views incompatible with the dignity of human nature, any who supposed that the world was ruled by chance or that men's souls died with their bodies; nor were such sceptics allowed to air their opinions except in the company of sedate persons. But, once the doctrines of theism and immortality had been safeguarded, King Utopus had shown himself profoundly tolerant in his institutions, believing as he did that, whilst only one religion was true, its truth must be made plain by argument and discussion.

Popular theology among the Utopians, as the very name—Mithra—by which they designated the unknown God discovered, had reached much the same condition as in the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries after Christ. In their uncertainty they eschewed icons and kept their churches dim, so that each man might conceive the form of the deity as pleased him best. Yet the ceremonial effect produced by the gorgeous decoration, the white robes of the congregation, the coloured vestments of the priests, the mass of lambent tapers, the smell of incense, the rare and exquisite consonance between the melody of the vocal and instrumental music, embellished the sacrifices of the cult in a manner entirely happy and satisfying; whilst the absence of contentious matter in the prayers enabled men of various shades of belief to worship in common one whom all alike regarded as the author of their being, the benefactor of their lives and the director of their purposes. Differences of opinion were

gracefully dissolved in the joint and several petitions to be led into truth, if still in error, or to be kept constant in faith, if verity were actually possessed; and a single orison seemed to resume the whole sense of the liturgy—that every man, forsooth, might go to God when this life ended. It followed that public opinion would not countenance any presentation of death as the king of terrors, and that anyone in whom such an attitude towards it was perceived was reckoned by the Utopians to have something amiss with him. “They think,” so Hythloday reported, “that he shall not be welcome to God who, when he is called, runneth not to him gladly.” It was all of a piece with these ideas that funerals, though reverently executed, had yet about them a certain air of gaiety. For sickness in itself, however, there was abundance of compassion; and, if the pain were incurable, the sufferer would be advised, though not coerced, to take the shortest way out of it. But suicide upon one’s own initiative and without the approbation of the rulers in church and state, was reckoned disgraceful; and in such an event the burial of the body was performed without honour.

The hierarchy, in view of the extensive powers confided to, and the high standard required of it, was limited with as much circumspection as it was selected. Thirteen priests were considered enough for any city, but those thirteen appeared to be deservedly held in the utmost honour. They might be of either sex, though young women were never eligible and old women not often chosen; and the males, being free to marry, were reckoned suitable husbands for the most distinguished women of the country. It was in ordinary times on the first and last days of the month and the year, when, decked out with birds’ feathers so disposed about their vestments as to suggest divine mysteries, they offered high sacrifice, that the priests were most in evidence. But in time of war they gained a further dignity, accompanying as

they did the armies to the field and in the height of battle offering prayers first of all for peace, then for victory and always for the reduction of bloodshed to a minimum. Their duties included active intervention to stay the slaughter, if the Utopians were victorious, or, alternatively, to soften the terms of settlement, if the enemy had the best of it; and in these objects the respect everywhere entertained for them secured their success. For the rest their prayers and endeavours reflected very closely the sentiment of the Utopians towards bloodshed. A people, indeed, who showed not the slightest comprehension of the pleasures of sport, saw nothing amusing in the pursuit of one animal by another, and felt so frankly disgusted at the butchery of the victim as to hand the whole business of hunting over to the bondmen responsible for the supply of the meat-market, was not likely to glorify the processes of human slaughter. So far, in fact, did their rationality carry the Utopians in this direction that they had no scruple about the use of cunning and deception to avert warfare or, if war nevertheless ensued, in expending their reserves of money in the corruption of the enemy or the hire of mercenaries so as to save themselves from fighting. Not indeed that they were incapable of belligerency if they were absolutely forced to it, nor that they were unwilling to give aid to their friends if these were attacked! For they waged war well enough, when it came to the point, keeping an unswerving hold upon their original objective, and fighting so much the better on account of two of their most singular institutions.

One of these was the presence of a man's near relatives at his side in battle, even his wife being encouraged to accompany him; for in this way he was given the utmost occasion to stand his ground and incurred the utmost obloquy if he took to his heels. But there was another arrangement which bore upon the case of battle as it bore

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upon almost every other circumstance in the economy of the Utopians, and which must consequently be reckoned the most notable of their customs. They had their property in common. A soldier, when engaged in hostilities, was thus without anxiety about the fate of his family, since they were provided for already and nothing that he could do would add to their security. Money was of use to the Government merely for such exterior objects as we have seen—the payment of mercenaries or the purchase of traitors. In Utopia itself it had no currency, and was, in fact, together with gold, silver and precious stones, thoroughly despised. One of the best stories that Hythloday had to tell turned upon this very point.

It appeared that a distant nation—the Anemolians—a people named perhaps from their wind-swept country, or more likely nicknamed from their inflated conception of their own consequence, had sent an embassy to Amaurote, and that the ambassadors, ignorant of the inverted opinions of the Utopians respecting the precious metals, dress and jewels, had arrived all resplendent with finery—cloth of gold, pearls, peacocks' feathers, and gilded ornaments—in the confident hope of making the people stare. The people stared indeed, but not in the way intended. The chiefs of the mission with their golden chains were at once assumed to be bondmen; whilst their bejewelled caps caused much amusement and evoked not a little mockery among the children, who took these for proof of a too-prolonged affection in the wearers for the baubles of the nursery. All the honours of the day fell thus to the train of menials in the modesty of whose apparel the eyes of the spectators discovered the mark of distinction. The "Lady Money," as Hythloday called it, and all her tinsel crowd of courtiers was, in fact, a mistress entirely unattractive to Utopian eyes. The mere desire of her seemed to them to promise a whole tribe of ugly things—fraud and

theft, strife and brawling, treason and murder—and the possession of her to bring to birth perhaps the worst monster of the lot, the pride which measures its own consequence against the wretchedness or the defect of others. The idea of a commonwealth as a state where, precisely, wealth was common to all, where no man had the opportunity to overreach his neighbour, and where no one was in a position to glory by reason of having more than another, seemed to them to possess such obvious recommendations that what first interested them in Christianity, when Hythloday spoke of it, was the communal aspect of property in the primitive Church. He and his companions, it appeared, had proved no mean apostles, and a number of conversions had followed. The converts, however, were not all of them tactful. One of them argued hotly, not only commending his own faith with conviction, but denouncing the beliefs of other men with violence, until as a result he was exiled for a seditious violation of the law of toleration. As to the prospects of Christianity in the Island, Hythloday could tell his hearers nothing. No Christian clergy were available, nor was there any means of appointing them; for it was not until a later date that Canon Phillips, at that time Vicar of Croydon, being taken with what he heard from More of the place, insisted that he must be sent out as Bishop of Utopia.¹ All that was immediately apparent was the readiness of the Utopians to exchange a natural for a supernatural religion on a like foundation of humility and concord. Yet More was left wondering, as Hythloday closed, whether, for all its agreeable and desirable features, Utopia was also Eutopia—an entirely fortunate place. A thousand objections touching different points in the manners and customs of the natives rose to his lips. His old-fashioned chivalry questioned certain of their proceedings, his religious convictions others; and he found himself unable

¹ See More's Introductory Epistle to the "Utopia."

to reconcile his sentiments in regard to nobility and magnificence, majesty and honour with the community of property to which they attached such prodigious consequence. Courtesy and consideration alike, however, forbade him to raise difficulties on the instant, and all the more that Hythloday had made so clear his impatience of contradiction or anything suggestive of captious criticism. It seemed in the circumstances more civil to praise both the country and the narrative. This, therefore, More did, and forthwith carried his pocket Columbus off to supper, foreshadowing some fuller talk on the topic of Utopia another day. But that day never came; nor did it ever transpire whether Hythloday died, as some supposed, shortly after on his way to his own country, or whether, disgusted with the fashions of his own countrymen, he sought once more the society of the Utopians. Anyhow, he disappeared; and with him Utopia vanished again into the mists.

* * * * *

More had dropped into the current of contemporary opinion a book which floated out, alongside of Erasmus's "Encomium Moriae" and Luther's Bible and Tyndale's New Testament, upon the storm-tossed waters of the early sixteenth century to find a place at length upon the beach of remembrance. It ran at once into many editions, and could be read before long in many languages. From generation to generation it continued to please, to amuse, to interest and to edify. From the dimensions of a tale it gradually grew to the proportions of a gospel. To have left it unread became tantamount to confessing a defect of social education, only less considerable perhaps than ignorance of Plato's immortal dialogue or Swift's satiric fable. Lacking as it does the vagrant mysticism of the one and the brutal cynicism of the other, and neither degrading the function of women nor

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defaming the nature of men, it may easily serve to open a more practical discussion of the true basis of a commonwealth than either; whilst the generous sympathy which informs its pages and the merry mischief which points its tale need no recommendation.

VIII

UTOPIA REVISITED

Two problems, as was indicated in the last chapter, are likely to haunt the student as he lays the "Utopia" down: what exactly, in the first place, the book meant to More; and what exactly, in the second, it should mean to himself. Did its author intend it for anything more than such a *jeu d'esprit* as, shall we say, Disraeli's "Popanilla"—the product of a young man's fancy lightly turning on the political abstractions and absurdities of the time? Or, alternatively, are those of us right who would treat it as a well-considered piece of political wisdom? Questions both of them that admit of no terse, decided answers, but that claim some consideration at least before we take leave of a book that has done more than all his theological writings to keep its author's name in memory.

More, we might remind ourselves, then, for a start, was not all fun; and neither must we be all solemnity. The same enigmatic quality that men noticed in his face is present in his works; and merry jests are mixed with and jostle grave reflections. We cannot always be sure when he is laughing, but we can be sure that he laughs a lot, and that we must be prepared to laugh a little with him. The "Utopia" at a first glance has, indeed, the look of a pendant to the "Encomium Moriae," the author seeming to be almost as much set upon making a mock of men with the aid of wisdom as Erasmus with the aid of folly. But, however that may be, the dominant motif in the tale is clearly critical rather than constructive. An imaginary State, that is to say,

nothing but Human Reason to guide it, is so displayed as to put to shame the actual State with everything at its back that Revelation can give it. Natural Religion, in other words, is shown affording better results in theory than Supernatural Religion has done in practice. The "Utopia" is thus in its inmost essence the most caustic of comments upon man's use, or rather neglect of Christianity; and in this cardinal fashion, therefore, More's purpose, as we can make sure from all we know of his character and opinions, is direct and definite. So, when Hythloday exposes to ridicule the bad logic that makes men cruel, the poor sense of values that makes them mercenary, and the lack of conviction in the goodness of God that makes them fear death, we feel More prompting out of the fullness of his heart. But, if his personality is whole-heartedly present in all that is critical in the book, it is only tentatively present in all that is constructive. His judicial mind remains aloof and questioning, even where his artistic mind is actively busy in the presentation of a point of view and the creation of a polity. There should be no doubt on this point, and for an unanswerable reason. He has put himself in as a character in the piece.

It is open to anyone to argue that the real Shakespeare is to be found, as Frank Harris, for example, maintained, in the mind of Richard II or, as perhaps keener critics have said, in that of Prospero, because Shakespeare nowhere figures in any cast. But it is not possible to maintain that More is Hythloday, for More is there beside Hythloday to speak for himself. And, if More is not Hythloday, no less clearly is Hythloday not More. With a name connoting whimsies in one syllable and reminiscent of Daedalus¹ in another, this innate visionary is, in fact, plainly intended for the counterpart of Peter Giles, the conservative born. But More himself, in spite of W. S. Gilbert's much-quoted, but now somewhat

¹ See on this Sampson's edition of the "Utopia," p. 24 (footnote).

of a commonwealth is addressed, not to the monarchists of the kingdom of England, but to the republicans of the universe of letters—to that “little public,” in fact, which, as Voltaire was to observe, is the true public as distinct from what his contemptuous, eighteenth-century soul dared to denominate “the vulgar.” But, even had a learned language not been there to prove the point, it would be difficult to believe that one, already engaged in state affairs and soon to become more deeply involved in them, was trying to produce what it is pretty safe to say no responsible statesman actually in power has ever truly desired—an economic revolution. And in truth the notion is expressly repudiated in the colloquy of More with Hythloday. “This school philosophy,” the Englishman observes, “is not unpleasant among friends in familiar communication, but in the counsels of kings, where great matters be debated and reasoned with great authority, these things have no place.”

No burning thoughts assuredly, no set, fanatical resolve to turn the world upside-down created the personality and opinions of Raphael Hythloday; but rather a wish in the quiet of a library to turn the problem of wealth and poverty inside-out and see what would come of it. And, if a study for the edification of the Few has in process of time grown into a pamphlet for the excitation of the Many, that is only because dry light has been focused upon crackling thorns and kindled them to fire. The most perhaps that More had meant to do was to put to his own generation in a form sufficiently striking to make thoughtful people think, the question which every statesman, if not every man, has sooner or later to put to himself—the question how the State is to be delivered from the perennial dog-fight between the Rich and the Poor and converted—to borrow the phraseology of a later age—into that “partnership in every virtue and in all perfection” for which Humanism, let alone Humanity, cries out. With

characteristic humour the Gordian knot is cut in the "Utopia" by the wholesale transfer of all property from private to public hands. "There is nothing," Hythloday relates, "within the houses that is private or any man's own. And every tenth year they change their houses by lot." Plato, it must be remembered, had not tried anything quite so bold as this. The Guardians alone in his "Republic" had all things common. But in the commonwealth described by Hythloday the whole body of citizens were communists, both contented and complete; and the question inevitably arises, at the very outset of any inquiry into the justice of his observations, whether he had not walked unawares into a company of angels, even if slightly soiled and lightly fallen.

"Socialism," so Bishop Creighton is reported to have said, "will never come until men become angels, and then it won't be wanted." Perhaps he should have said 'communism' and 'come to stay.' But anyhow there is little enough in human experience to exclude the hypothesis that the Utopians were not quite human. History, in spite of some curious attempts to demonstrate the contrary, has not yet displayed Utopian institutions as the spiritual home of degenerate man. Hythloday had hardly made public his adventures before Münzer at Mühlhausen and John of Leyden at Münster made memorable attempts to put communism into practice, though both alike with such vigour of violence that justice had made away with them before they had concluded their exposition of equity. The notion of common ownership found, however, new champions in the Puritan Levellers, who under the title of Diggers established, in the time of the Commonwealth, a transient community of equalitarians at St. George's Hill. But it was not until the Jesuit Fathers settled in Paraguay, where for a century and more they conducted a Christian republic so successfully as to provoke the commendation of Voltaire, that the ideas of the "Utopia" can be

said to have been put to anything in the nature of fair experiment. Not, it is true, so very fair either! For the Jesuits had Christianity to help them, which other Utopians, whether of the former or the latter breed, have not had; and the circumstances in Paraguay, too, were peculiar, with a lot of primitive people under the direction of a few highly sophisticated and singularly selfless rulers. For a test-case with unimpeachable credentials we might have therefore to turn to the settlement of a million acres in Texas under the name of Icaria by Etienne Cabet in 1848. Everything in Cabet's plans was as perfect as mathematics could make it; all was equality, symmetry and, if the truth be told, stupidity. Human nature declined to fit into his formulas, and, which is only to say the same thing, the Icarians were found to consist of a flesh and blood very dissimilar from the Utopian. To make assurance sure, however, the plan that miscarried in Texas was tried again in Illinois. The result was identical; and Cabet, who had lived a communist, died a pauper.

Nothing, however, is so quickly lost as political experience. Before the century was out William Lane, an Australian visionary, was renewing Cabet's efforts. His communist colony,¹ styled New Australia and by an odd coincidence located in Paraguay, enjoyed every advantage that land and labour could afford, not to speak of the example and inspiration of the former Jesuit commonwealth. But the secular sons of Lane had little likeness to the spiritual sons of Loyola, and the last thing perhaps that they really fancied was to live with one another like those that serve. Deprived of the temptation to covet each other's goods, they seemed so much the more tempted to envy one another's occupations. The man whose business compelled him to make use of his legs was offended by the sight of another carried comfortably along on the back of a horse. The citizen whose arms were employed in the

¹ See on this Stewart Grahame, "Where Socialism Failed."

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fellings of trees grew jealous of him whose softer job it was to make music with his mouth. And the good soul who had a mind to pause from bodily toil and give a turn to philosophic meditation not unnaturally resented the intrusion of a foreman bidding him resume his manual labours. Thus, at the end, coercion, in the shape of Lane with a revolver and the Paraguayan police with bayonets, was compelled to come to the aid of an enthusiasm that had waned and a brotherly love that had grown cold. New Australia gradually returned to the habits of Old Australia; and at Cosme, where Lane made a second venture in communism, a similar resumption of ancient habits was ultimately seen.

The tale, however, of Hythloday's disciples was not yet told, nor the claims of experience fully satisfied. It was always easy to say that the scale of these experiments had been too small, and that only a wider opportunity was needed to avoid a muddle. Utopian thought, as voiced nowadays by its epigoni, claims the whole world for its oyster and stands all ready with hammer and sickle to open it. Fortune has wisely surrendered something less than the whole globe to this large ambition, yet something admirably suited to test the value of the great design—a country as little industrialised as any in Europe and a people as tractable as a strong vein of oriental fatalism can make them. And that has followed in Russia which in face of the stability of human nature and the permanence of racial types was probable. Amidst the resounding denunciations of conservatives and the doubting acclamations of socialists, it seems pretty clear that History *mutatis mutandis* is quietly repeating itself. Despotism rules still, a little intensified; cruelty continues, not a little increased;¹ the Soviet collective farm recalls the primitive

¹ W. H. Chamberlin, "Russia's Iron Age," p. 265. "That Soviet repression is more severe than that of the Tsars is scarcely open to denial. . . . Far more people were executed or were banished to hard labour with-

village community; the philosophy of pure materialism assumes the attributes of a degraded religion; and the corpse of Lenin, deemed to be himself as dead as mutton, is venerated with as much unction as the relics of an immortal saint.

"There is," observes a well-qualified modern writer,¹ "so much that is strikingly, obviously, flamboyantly new in the Soviet system that the foreigner who spends a short time in Russia may quite naturally come to the conclusion that there has been a complete break with everything that antedates the Bolshevik Revolution. But the longer I have lived in Russia, the more I have been impressed by the tremendous grip which former administrative ideas and practices still maintain, by the numerous links and parallels, some curious, some humorous, some sinister, which unmistakably bind the autocracy of the Romanovs and of still earlier Tsars with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." "I am convinced," he goes on, "that one can learn more about the spirit and the realities of the Soviet Union by reading a few good histories of Russia than by poring over innumerable speeches of Soviet leaders with their stereotyped phrases and endless statistics."

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose! There is always room in Russia for a Peter the Great or a Lenin to introduce Western inventions, but, if Hythloday had seen wholesale starvation inflicted upon a wretched peasantry for the hoarding of grain and long imprisonment imposed for merely trying to pick a flower,² he might have felt obliged to revise his discoveries regarding the perfectibility of Man with the State as pedagogue.

out public trial and for political offences during the period 1928-1933 than during the last five years of Tsarism 1909-1914."

¹ W. H. Chamberlin, "Russia's Iron Age," pp. 252-3. Mr. Chamberlin's qualifications as an observer receive handsome recognition in Sir W. Citrine's "I Search for Truth in Russia," p. 126.

² In his "Russia To-day," p. 20—a book intended to give the most favourable account consistent with truth of the Bolshevik régime—Dr. Sherwood Eddy gives an apparently well-authenticated case of this.

Not, however, to do Hythloday justice, that Bolsheviks would for a moment have been welcomed in the Utopian circles that he knew! Paradoxical as it may appear, these censors of our old civilisation, these makers of brave new worlds, these re-makers of mankind, would under Utopian law and custom have been excluded from public offices as profane and unprofitable persons. Too tolerant as a rule to persecute, the Utopians, as we have seen, had no use for such as slandered man in his honour, involved as that was, in their view, in any denial of his immortality or of faith in providence. The anti-God campaign of the Bolsheviks would thus, it is clear from Hythloday's observations, have struck the original Utopians as peevish nonsense, if not as devilish depravity; whilst of the dogmatically imposed philosophy of "autodynamism," in virtue of which any up-to-date Russian is able to perceive that all the countless forms of animate life with all that these display of intricate design and infinite adaptability were brought forth by matter of its own inherent volition, they were perhaps too little fanciful and too austere rational to have made anything at all.

The pure milk of the Utopian word has, it must be confessed, been a good deal adulterated by its modern evangelists and, if intellectual eugenics ever became the fashion, the Marxian branch of the Utopian family might have to be stopped from breeding. It is Mr. Wells himself who tells us that Marx offered to "the cheapest and basest of human impulses the poses of a pretentious philosophy," and that Marxianism is "the simple panacea" of "a stuffy, ego-centred and malicious theorist."¹ If the children's teeth are thus set on edge, it is not unlikely that the parents have at one time or another eaten sour grapes. Yet, even if the grapes had been sweeter, and even if the coming race were all accommodated with something analogous to "the pleasant, well-lit writing-

¹ H. G. Wells, "Experiment in Autobiography," I, p. 180.

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room" which Mr. Wells conceives as the proper scene of his own labours, and were all to sleep in "the comfortable bedroom, free from distracting noises and all unexpected disturbances," that he depicts for ideal repose, and were all to possess the secretary or typist "within call and out of earshot"¹ whom, in accents curiously suggestive of privilege recovering its flunk, he pleads for as conducive to the final bliss of a well-ordered life—even if all this were to be, some appeal would still be necessary from the New to the Old Utopians. For, whilst Prof. Chambers goes too far in characterising Utopia as "a sternly righteous and Puritanical State,"² the Old Utopians were assuredly moralists in a sense which the New Utopians do not apprehend. With the Greek ancestry that Hythlodæus attributed to them, Man figured in the midst of their political picture, not as some cunning amalgam of brain and body to be raised by increasing mechanical efficiency from one plane of comfort to the next, but as an intellectual soul winging its way to heaven; and More would have made merry, though with a graver face than ever, over well-laid plans for reaching earthly paradises in feather-beds. Not so had he understood human life or mortal conditions; nor, as we shall see, did the totalitarian state of the Tudors give him cause to revise his opinion.

It needs, in truth, such juices as were contained in Puck's deluding herb—some love-in-idleness or heartsease culled in the fields of politics and dropped into mortal eyes—to prevent all the devils of doubt or guardian-angels of scepticism from coming into view and scattering the airy forms of the Utopian masque. The soul of the State—is it really there at all? Is it, in fact, anything better than a static fiction under which is veiled the dynamic energy of one or more individuals raised to authority above their fellows? Men like to think so,

¹ H. G. Wells, "Experiment in Autobiography," I, p. 19.

² Chambers, "Thomas More," p. 125.

who would yet deny the poetry, let alone the truth, of any organic life to other corporations, no less credibly alive. But let that be; for, to be worthy of the confidence that the Utopians reposed in it, the State needs, not merely a soul, but the soul of a saint. And who has ever thought of a State as a subject for canonisation? There have been men whom their fellow-creatures have found reason to call blessed and whose congregation is the congregation of just men made perfect; and History speaks of one fictitious Empire and one factitious League to which the name of "holy" has been applied at first in good faith, but soon in fancy, and finally in fun. But who in the world ever characterised a State as saintly?

Consider, for example, Balzac's observation that "the State is a hundred times harder than the greediest industrialist."¹ Or consider the State as it appears in relation to property and possession, and inquire how often the historian has been given the satisfaction of recording that any government had of its own free will, out of honest regard for equity and without hope of reward or compulsion of circumstance, surrendered to another a piece of territory or a sum of money. Consider how even in our own highly instructed and fully experienced age the State can show itself close as a miser, grasping as a bandit, or extravagant as a stage millionaire. Do not, indeed, judge it too harshly, if perhaps we have seen it debase our currency or dodge its debts. Such things will happen. The times have been difficult; and "the end" in the ethics of the statesman so often appears in its crude, and not in its true casuistical sense "to justify the means." But consider rather how the State falls short of general sentiment and, though itself a defaulter, will, on occasion, for all the world like the unmerciful servant in the parable, throw defaulting debtors

¹ "La Cousine Bette," Vol. II, c. 2. "L'Etat est plus dur cent fois que l'industriel le plus avide."

into prison. Or reflect how, for a little gain, it will peep and take excise about a grave, though it be that of a wife who has lost her husband or a husband who has lost his wife, and though, when both were living in this world together, it had never visualised them as other than one flesh, even if only for the sake of raising their surtax. Consider the soul—the *anima discortese*—thus curiously revealed; consider what we must reluctantly have said of it if it had been lodged in any human breast; and consider finally whether, after all, it be the individual who for his own health has the more need that all things be held in common, or not rather the State that for the common weal needs to leave them privately possessed. A problem, doubtless, not to be wholly resolved by an examination of the manners implicit in modern socialistic finance, any more than of those exchequer methods of More's boyhood which went by the name of Morton's fork,¹ yet a problem that was being raised then as now by the troubles of the time and the everlasting friction of wealth with poverty! A problem anyhow that is presented in the "Utopia" with a critical insight wanting to such subsequent imitations as Bellamy's "Looking Backward" or Morris's "News from Nowhere," and mainly because its author was an honest traveller, and not a missionary in disguise.

In point of principle nothing was wanting to the completeness of the "Utopia"; the notion it set out to examine was explored in all essentials; and the student who desires to clear his thought on the subject of the communistic tendencies of to-day can hardly do better than take it for a text-book. Artistically speaking, the writer has laid upon his thesis just the burden it could bear. A feather-weight more, and the delicate balance between known fact and playful fancy, which such fantasies require, might have been lost and the whole conception have tilted over into absurdity. The

¹ It is said that Fox's fork would have been a more accurate description.

Utopians were certainly a peculiar people—peculiar in their capacity of absorbing into their society without apparent difficulty those perpetually invading hordes of charming little barbarians who, as Leplay somewhere suggests, are as much the bane of sociologists as the delight of mothers; peculiar in producing no more criminals than were required to supply their need of bondsmen; peculiar in their freedom from any youthful enthusiasm for change, their static contentment with the institutions of King Utopus, their sweet reasonableness and measured gait. Yet they were not so peculiar that we cease to believe in them altogether; nor was their conduct so extraordinary that those who had read Vespucci's account of his voyages, from which More derived one or two of their more surprising characteristics, must think them incredible. Throughout the book, however, and right to its very close, More maintains an attitude as intellectually sceptical as it is sentimentally sympathetic; and we shall not perhaps fully resolve this contradiction unless we remember that, whilst the porch and façade and decoration of the Utopian edifice are of a date contemporary with the discovery of the New World, the framework of the structure is still markedly medieval.

The "Utopia," thus regarded, might perhaps be compared to a house of which the general lines are pleasing enough, but which reconstruction has deprived of its first austere elegance by the introduction of amusing, yet incongruous detail. Heir in a very real sense of the Middle Age, even though so abundantly equipped by education to build the bridge of the Renaissance between the mountain scenery behind and the broad plain below, More belonged by inheritance to a society into which communism of a kind had gracefully and intelligently entered. The dogmatic notion of linear progress, which the nineteenth century held so dear, sometimes blinds us to the possibility that the political,

like the physical world may be round and civic ideas moving only in concentric circles. The Middle Age, on this assumption, might be regarded as the gravitational centre of communistic thought. "The feudal system," observes a thoughtful writer on the subject, "was, perhaps, the nearest approach to a consistent system of communism that has ever been practised on a large scale."¹ The land in that system formed the framework of the social structure; and the land belonged, at least in principle, to the king. All men held from him either directly or indirectly; and he himself in his turn held of all in the sense that on pain of deposition he must make good his claim to represent his people. Divine right was still only one face of a coin that had divine duty embossed upon its other side. In that world of so-called "status," rights were much more closely allied to duties than in the world of "contract" that came afterwards. If suit and service, either personal or national, were left undone, then privilege was withdrawn or perished. No man from the king downwards could trade upon his inheritance. The whole of society was, in fact, conceived, to a degree that we can now hardly realise, as mutually dependent; and all the distortions inflicted upon it by pride and avarice left it still in idea boldly integrated. Even yet, if we dissect its skeleton, we might conclude that Plato's "Republic" had shaped the pattern of its bones. There are the three orders of his commonwealth marked out as plainly as they well can be—the guardians, the warriors, and the large bulk of the society employed in agriculture and commerce, reappearing, a little refined perhaps by some increase of faith and chivalry, as clerks and knights and commons. The guardians have indeed forgone community of wives and turned celibate; and the warriors have cultivated romance and reverence for women. But the attitude towards property both of the clergy and the

¹ Bede Jarrett, "Social Theories of the Middle Age," p. 132.

knights is to a large degree platonic. The regular forces of the Church—the monks and friars—are sworn to personal poverty and community of goods; the territorial forces—the parish priests—are, at least in Chaucer's view, richer with "holy thought and work" than earthly possessions; whilst the gentlemen of England, though not wanting robber-barons and brigand knights within their ranks, appear even to a fault aware that the making of money is no part of their business.

Here is, in fact, a society so constituted as to hold sanctity and courage in high esteem and worldly wealth of low account. Its aim was not, indeed, to have all things equal, after the manner of the political agitator, but all things common, after the manner of the early Christian. Some of the Fathers, and not a few canonists and commentators after them, had asserted that "the sweetest form of possession is a common one," and that "mine and thine come of iniquity";¹ and the Friars, when they appeared, had taken up the tale, the Franciscans, as became the children of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, insisting upon the essential place of poverty in the spiritual life, and the Dominicans, as befitted sons of Aquinas and students of Aristotle, countenancing the continuance of personal property at least for the term of the present distress, though rather perhaps as a concession to the common interest of concord than to any natural right inherent in the individual. Possessions, Aristotle had declared, should be private in ownership, public in use; and St. Thomas seized upon the epigram as a working compromise. But, even so, community of goods remained the ideal of the religious orders, and the unlimited accumulation of wealth in private hands a proceeding upon which the Church looked askance. A man was justified in seeking a fortune sufficient for the needs of his family or the maintenance of his condition; but beyond

¹ See for references M. Beer, "History of British Socialism," I, pp. 9 and 10.

this the piling up of riches had to be explained and excused by some altruistic object or some public design. Superfluity ought rather to be spent than saved.

Such doctrine, whether expounded by the gentle spirit of a St. Antonino or the fiery soul of a Savonarola, has of course obvious difficulties, limitations, and crudities. Yet, for all that, few will nowadays be prepared to say that it does not get nearer to the heart of things than the alternative doctrine, at any rate as expounded by such impersonations of a supposedly more progressive economy as Gradgrind and Bounderby in the pages of "Hard Times." There is—to revert to the metaphor already used—a sense of values and of proportion in medieval economics as agreeably different from what followed them as Gothic spires from the broken, horizontal line of baroque architecture. Here was a building fitly framed together and capable of affording large hospitality with little friction to collectivist and individualist alike, if only they had consented to keep their proper quarters. And evidence of its spacious artistry can be seen, not only in the fact that fragments of the design, as reflected in the "Utopia" or as unearthed by the historian, have furnished Labour politics with more than one none too graciously acknowledged model; but in the way in which visionaries as various as Scott and Disraeli, Newman and Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris have turned to imaginations—not invariably fond—of the Middle Age for inspiration, and to some study of the medieval mind for counsel.

More saw both the period and the mentality at closer quarters and judged them with clearer, more sceptical eyes. Not that he had any objection himself to Catholic social architecture! With his profound devotion to Carthusian ideals, his great simplicity of living, and his preoccupation with the things of the spirit and the mind, he could have made his home contentedly beneath its vaulted roofing. But,

as the first book of the "Utopia" so abundantly demonstrates, he was fully aware how egregiously Christian men had failed to inhabit the house that they had built. In allowing Hythloday to recommend to them a fuller and fiercer measure of communism than they had yet had, he was then plainly bent rather upon social satire than social salvation. He was far too much a man of the world to think, or to allow any careful reader to think, that academic ideals can be plastered on to practical politics, to forget that often from a statesman's standpoint "*le mieux est ennemi du bien*," or to suppose that, because 'to cast away riches is to attain to wealth,'¹ it had become less true that 'the magic of property would turn sand to gold.' "There is another philosophy more civil," he observes to Hythloday, whilst deprecating the indiscriminate, ubiquitous employment of the "school philosophy" as he calls it, embodied in the "Utopia," "which knoweth . . . her own stage and thereafter ordering and behaving herself in the play that she hath in hand, playeth her part . . . with comeliness, uttering nothing out of due order and fashion. And this is the philosophy that you must use." "For by bringing in other stuff that nothing appertaineth to the present matter," he goes on towards the close of the first book, "you must needs mar and pervert the play that is in hand, though the stuff you bring be much better. What part soever you have taken upon you, play that as well as you can and make the best of it: and do not therefore disturb and bring out of order the whole matter, because that another, which is merrier and better, cometh to your remembrance." And, as if this were not enough to make plain his scepticism, More explains with trenchant sarcasm in the very last paragraph of the second book that Hythloday seemed both so tired and so touchy at the close of their colloquy that he restrained himself from criticism

¹ Morris in "News from Nowhere."

of Utopian laws and customs although in fact these seemed to him often very absurdly (*perquam absurde*) framed and most of all in respect of a community of life without any possession of money and with the consequent loss of "all nobility, magnificence, worship, honour and majesty, the true ornaments and honours, as the common opinion is, of a commonwealth."

These utterances fall short, no doubt, of the full content of a mind typically English as much in its native sympathy with the now proverbial "under-dog" as in its strong grasp of actualities. "The English intellect," declares a foreign writer on these subjects, "is essentially revolutionary."¹ The English intellect—or is it not rather the English heart? Something at any rate there is in English mentality or morality which revolts with exceptional strength against the hardness of human conditions—something which made even the pungent old nineteenth-century Whig declare that "we are all socialists now," something which gave Thomas More's treatment of wealth in the "Utopia," not indeed the poetry of St. Francis's wooing of poverty, but all the inherent pity of it. It was argued that there was no passion of ideas to be found in the "Utopia"; nor is there. Yet in compassion the book abounds—a compassion inarticulate perhaps, but not inaudible. Hythloday is indeed supposed to be a Portuguese; but all the description he affords of contemporary England under cover of an imaginary conversation, perhaps reminiscent of one that really occurred at Lambeth, is plainly charged with More's own sentiment about the state of the country. In all the comment upon worthless gentlemen, parasitical retainers, decayed swashbucklers, grasping landlords, as well clerical as lay, and poor folk deprived of a living through the conversion of ploughed land into pasture, we are listening beyond doubt to the beating of a heart very impatient of all

¹ M. Beer, "History of British Socialism," I, Preface.

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really unproductive expenditure, and as tender as it was stout. It may be retorted that the moralist here is out of line with the economist. Not in such terms as these did Thorold Rogers¹ speak of the period! To that student of comparative prices and wages, the life and times of Thomas More seemed coincident with the golden age of Labour—the age precisely when the English labourer was getting the best value for his money in the things that counted most to his comfort. But the difference between the two points of view involves, unhappily, no serious contradiction. Amidst the endless change of economic conditions and vagaries of economic doctrine the poor in one way or another are always with us.

More in his proper person certainly neither entertained nor encouraged any expectation that rich and poor could be merged in some artificial mean. In his last utterance upon the subject from the Tower, as he looked out upon the world with all the experience of life and dispassionateness of death, he accepts inequality of wealth as being in the order of things and worse than idle to contend against.

“. . . This,” he observes, “I think in my mind a very sure conclusion that if all the money that is in this country were to-morrow next brought together out of every man’s hand and laid all upon one heap and then divided out unto every man alike, it would be on the morrow after worse than it was the day before. For I suppose, when it were all equally thus divided among all, the best should be left little better then than almost a beggar is now. . . . Men cannot, you wot well, live here in this world, but if that some one man provide a means of living for some other many. . . . Some man that hath not two ducats in his house were better forbear them both and leave himself not a farthing but utterly

¹ “Six Centuries of Work and Wages,” p. 326.

lose all his own than that some rich man by whom he is weekly set a work should of his money lose the one half. For then were he himself like to lack work. For surely the rich man's substance is the wellspring of the poor man's living."¹

So More argued, after the manner of many sensible men both before and after him. If we still persist in asking why the poor must be always with us and, as now appears, even more with us than they were before, the answer must be that the problem of poverty was a problem of character before ever it became a problem of circumstance, and will never be within reach of solution until Rich and Poor alike have learned—if they can ever learn—to look into one another's faces with the bright eyes of lovers seeking their Beloved, and no longer with the covetous eyes of men who have only too much cause—the rich as well as the poor—to fear exploitation. For, as the reader is already aware, in More's view "it was not possible for all things to be well, unless all men were good." "Which," even though four hundred years have gone by since he said it, we may still safely add in the terms of his own cautious understatement of the case "will not be yet this good many years."²

If, then, we would assimilate the fullness of More's thoughts regarding an ideal commonwealth, we must look for it neither in his book, nor even in any conception of society after the manner of his book, but in the sublime and haunting paradox of the Kingdom of God. Whilst individualists hope to see Utopia arrive by observation and socialists to bring it about by Fabianism or by force, he looked to that citizenship of the city of God, which the Utopian constitution appeared to postulate as a political idea as well as a religious consummation. Let men but pass over from the state of nature to

¹ "Dial. of Comfort" ("Works," p. 1208).

² "Utopia," Book I (p. 100 in Lupton's edition).

that of grace, so that all their wealth comes to seem to them as poverty and all their poverty as wealth, and the riddle that has baffled the wits of all the politicians from his day to ours would at last be read. So he thought; and so to this day some of us believe. Had he been told that this was a dream, he would have answered that he took it for no more; but that it was nevertheless a dream capable of passing through Virgil's gate of horn, whilst all such Utopian schemes as Hythloday's were bound for the ivory portals of illusion.

The world, however, or at least the English world, was not going More's way. Ideas, whose genesis we have yet to trace, were taking possession of its mind; and when in the next century Francis Bacon planned a new Utopia, it was with a Solomon's house or temple of science at the heart of it. The name was well chosen and is well sounding still. Yet, in fact, the heavenly wisdom for which Solomon had asked was not identical with the earthly wisdom which Bacon proffered; and Beer is perhaps justified in characterising the New Atlantis as "essentially materialistic, inasmuch as it presupposes human happiness to be the result of a general diffusion of wealth,"¹ and throwing it into strong contrast with More's Utopia, where, as he argues, the stress is laid upon social reform and religious ethics, as against natural science and economic productivity.² So likewise Mumford, who declares that "the shift from a heavenly Utopia to a worldly one came during that period of change and uneasiness which characterised the decline of the Middle Age."³ Such judgments, however, will seem to many but an ungracious return for all that knowledge has done for the amelioration of poverty and the relief of pain. Yet is the face of Science still the face of a sphinx. Beneath Solomon's House lies concealed a chamber of horrors piled high with

¹ Beer, "History of British Socialism," I, p. 50.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 48.

³ Mumford, "The Story of Utopia," p. 60.

weapons of destruction; and not one of those who enter there can say for certain whether he has come into a house of good fame or evil. Nor does even this exhaust the case of More against Bacon. Modern research has lately discovered, or re-discovered, that the Natural Man, whose closest living representatives are assumed to have been found amongst the remnant of primitive peoples, had originally good dispositions, and has degenerated only from contact with more sophisticated races. The lover of large ironies, indeed, could ask for nothing better in the way of sour amusement than to see the only three living politicians who have held the office of English Prime Minister pilloried by a distinguished anthropologist for their error in depicting the political animal, whom it has been their work to govern and to guide, as at the first a fierce and fearful savage. The tiger-instinct with which Mr. Baldwin credits men from their creation, like the love of slaughter which Lord Cecil¹ attributes to them as they first wander through the woods, is dismissed as moonshine; and we are referred back to the picture which More and Erasmus drew of him if we want to know the Natural Man as he once really was.²

There seems room in all this, not only for the idea of a Fall, but also for some doubt as to the value of any irresponsible consumption of the fruits of the tree of knowledge; and, if a man had now to elect between the citizenship of Utopia or of the New Atlantis, he might give reasons enough for choosing the former. But there could certainly be no hesitation left, if the choice lay between residing with Bacon at Gorhambury or inhabiting that vanished house in Chelsea where the household of Sir Thomas More displayed to a wondering world the merits of the Family as the social unit. The lovely Tudor building, with its façade

¹ In the Rickman Godlee lecture on "The Co-operation of Nations," p. 2.

² G. Elliot Smith, "Human History," Chaps. 5 and 6.

and projecting porch, its mixed bay and casement windows, its garden dropping down to the river—and that river “the sweet Thames, running softly” towards the sea—made a perfect setting for a scene of work and prayer, of scholarship and jest, of plain living and of thinking as high as a remarkable man and two or three golden girls could make it. The fool and the philosopher, the marmoset and the old harpy with the hooked beak—for so, as the reader may remember, Ammonius in distress saw fit to call Dame Alice—all were somehow fitted into a domestic economy of which many other representatives of the animal creation were likewise made free. Here, if we study it well, was a microcosm hardly in its way less complicated than that of the great world without, yet brought by the operation in its midst of a wise and courteous mind to a marvellous charm and beauty. Even so lately as forty years ago, when the Chelsea site was yet untroubled by traffic, the memory of the talk that had gone on there in the sixteenth century was still powerful to inspire a book¹ which a rather too kindly criticism has compared with Pater’s “Imaginary Portraits.” But, even if the genius of those old colloquies be spent, the conversation-picture, as Holbein saw it once and set it down, still remains vivid with the intellectual interests and throbbing affections of a household at unity with itself. Here was a happy family; and here, too, we see what every state at peace might come to be.

¹ Miss Manning’s “Household of Sir Thomas More.”

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OF the three ladders to great place so vigorously outlined in the famous letter of Maria to Malvolio, there can be no doubt which carried Thomas More to eminence. He was not born great, neither was he the architect of the high fortune that came to him. Had he had his own way, he would most probably have remained at the Bar and risen in due course, like his father before him, to the Bench. His greatness was assuredly thrust upon him. He came to court because he was in fact so bright and particular a star that his clear-shining brilliancy was needed to complete a constellation otherwise too obviously imperfect. To understand the strength of the pressure put upon him we have to remember that we are back in the period of the Renaissance, when, under the influence of Latin civilisation, the Humanities still formed part of the equipment of a complete man and no court appeared the duller for the cultivation of scholarship and song. The grandson of the "Lady Margaret" who, though Countess of Richmond and of Derby, still after four centuries possesses an undisputed primacy in the use of her maiden name, Henry VIII showed himself not unworthy of his descent. Occupied as he was with music, both in its larger Greek and its more specialised modern sense, he felt the presence of Thomas More—that "supreme delight of the Muses, of pleasantry, and of the Graces"¹—to be a glory indispensable to his English Pleiad. He would take no refusal. "He could not rest until he had dragged More to his Court," records

¹ Erasmus to Paulus Bombasius, July 26th, 1518. Nichols, III, p. 422.

Erasmus, emphasising the word "drag" by repetition and observing at the same time that none ever tried so hard to get into a court as More to keep out of it.¹ It was with the utmost reluctance that the author of "Utopia" at length surrendered to him whose will in these matters had for his subjects much the force of law. Erasmus in that respect occupied a stronger position, but even Erasmus had no little difficulty in escaping a similar servitude. "I throw away all my baggage to save my caps,"² he wrote; and from his scholar's cap no courtier's robe could tempt him. But then Erasmus was no subject of the English King, whilst More had obtained England for his province and was required, according to the best teaching of the ancients, to adorn it.³

It was on May 1st, 1517, that Erasmus left this country for the last time; and it happened that on the same night there broke out a City riot, which brought the Sheriffs on the scene. Had the two been causally as well as contemporaneously connected, had London risen in protest against the departure from these shores of the greatest European of the time, More might perhaps have been found in the ranks of the rioters instead of, as in the event, beside the Mayor and Sheriffs. The origins of the row were, however, less humane and its passions less international. It sprang, as subsequent investigation showed, from nothing more formidable than May-day mischief on the part of a pair of young cockney savages in high revolt against a sudden government order confining both masters and prentices to their quarters until 7 a.m. on the first morning of the merry month; it throve upon nothing more reputable than our English dislike of foreigners and desire to shake off their competition; and it concluded in nothing more creditable than some de-

¹ Nichols, III, pp. 361, 390, 396.

² Nichols, II, p. 524 (March, 1517).

³ Σπάρταν ἔλαχες, ταύταν κόσμει. (Euripides and Cicero.)

struction of the foreign quarter of Blanchapelton. More, Under-sheriff and legal adviser to the Mayor as he was, did what he might to calm the crowd. Brickbats and boiling water, however, were, it appears, already being freely flung about by the time of his appearance, and, when a serjeant-at-arms presently received hurt and cried out in his pain for retaliatory measures, the mob, fearing that they might perhaps get as good as they had given, became completely intractable. More sat upon the subsequent commission of inquiry, and if the tradition preserved in the supposedly Shakespearean pages of the play of "Sir Thomas More" is right, did what he could to soften the penalty. But there was no valid excuse for what had occurred; and the law took its course—and a hard course too—with some of the rollicking apprentices.

Executions in such circumstances prove the weakness rather than the strength of a government, for a strong administration can afford to spare where a weak one is sometimes bound to strike. The little fingers of the Tudors were thicker than the loins of the Plantagenets; the axe, the stake, the noose, not to speak of the rod, were seldom more active than in Tudor times, and, upon evidence not perhaps of the best, Henry VIII is said to have hanged 72,000 of his fellow-creatures.¹ Yet amidst this harsh and nerveless cruelty some greater evenness of justice was discerned by the contemporary legal chronicler. "The Cardinal," Hall observes, "punished also lords, knights and men of all sorts for riots, bearing² and maintenance in their countries that the poor men lived quietly so that no man durst bear for fear of imprisonment but he himself and his servants were well punished therefor."³

It was with the development of this more agreeable aspect

¹ See the article by W. F. Craies in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" (11th ed.) on "Capital Punishment"; cf. Pollard, "Wolsey," p. 71.

² Viz. "oppression."

³ Hall's "Chronicle" (ed. Ellis), 1811, p. 585.

of Wolsey's administrative activities that the author of the "Utopia," fresh from the tedious triumphs of a commercial negotiation at Calais, was called upon to associate himself when, in the autumn of 1517, he joined the Government. Appointed to be a member of the King's Council, he was told off to sit in the Court of Poor Men's Causes, subsequently known as the Court of Requests, but at this time rather a casual example of the King's conscience in commission than a full-blown tribunal. No more congenial work could have been allotted to him. He cared for the poor; he cared for justice; he longed to loose heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and generally to see that such as were in need and necessity had right. It was evident, in fact, that Wolsey knew his man and precisely what to do with him. To the King the entry of More into the Government afforded the companionship of a mind witty indeed, yet gravitating always towards the golden mean of wisdom; but to the people it secured the service of a golden heart. "You might call him," observes Erasmus, "the general patron of all poor people,"¹ so zealously did he seek to comfort the dejected, to advance the deserving, and give countenance or counsel, money or influence, as each case might require, to such as sought them.

To More himself, however, this promotion to great place proved no more of a pleasure than he had expected. He felt, he declares, as much discomfort as a bad rider in the saddle, and possessed so little of a courtier's temperament that, as he watched the flattery devoted to obtaining some royal smile and the complacency exhibited at receiving any mark of royal regard, it put him in mind of the good wives of London who were wont to stare so hard at the crucifix then standing on Tower Hill that they would declare the figure had moved its features benignly in response to their veneration. For all that, he was a great social success both

¹ Nichols III, 397.

with King and Queen. Night after night they would have him in at supper-time for the sake of his mirth and his merriment; so that it was perhaps but once a month that he could get home in the evening to his family. This lack of liberty was hateful to him; and he turned deliberately dull in conversation to gain, as we should say, a few evenings off. The King, however, had other uses for his society than those of an entertainer, however excellent. Together, from the leads of Westminster or Windsor, they would scan the heavens, study the stars in their courses, and perhaps speculate, as man has, presumably, done since the first clear night of his existence revealed to him the wonders of the celestial ceiling, what this vast pageant might signify and upon what errand those crystal spheres were bound.

Copernicus just about this time was excogitating the heliocentric theory, though it had not yet attained that preliminary expression which presently excited Pope Clement VII to urge the reluctant astronomer on to its publication; and the idea of the earth revolving about the sun was thus already in the intellectual air. But it is hardly to be supposed that either King or Councillor guessed that he was looking out upon a universe that was at last expanding to the size of his theology. For to an imaginative or artistic eye the theatre supplied by any geocentric or even heliocentric theory of astronomy may well appear inadequate to the far-flung action of the Scripture story and incommensurate with the existence of higher intelligences than our own. The study of mankind may exact no more than the narrow staging of our little world, but, let the eye once begin to search the mists behind time for the origins of good and evil, and the destinies of men become so mingled with those of angels that the play will desiderate, if it does not demand for the celestial prelude to man's procession across the ages ever-receding vistas and worlds without end.

More, as we may see from the vivid passage with which he was at a much later date to introduce his treatise on the Passion, had profoundly pondered the thought of war in heaven; and the Fall of the Angels enters into his philosophy of history as its initial fact. Without it the spectacular drama which artistic sense, and common sense too, proclaim to be in play before our eyes could hardly possess for such a mind as his intelligible meaning. Conflict so enters into the very nature of things and into the affairs of men that, unless we see it as in part an intimation of and participation in action on some larger scale than our own, it will almost certainly confound us by its existence. Conceived as a vital point upon a wide campaign where the Powers of good and evil are engaged, Earth becomes more patient of its suffering; just as, conceived as a volunteer in some vaster conflict of right against wrong, Man becomes proud of his destiny. But, let these conceptions be lost and let the secret counsels of God, as Luther supposed, prove to be nothing better than predestinarianism, and all the moral judgments of history fall into unintelligible chaos.

Accustomed as we are to Milton's organ-music, the treatment of the same theme by More may seem but as a recitative to a chorus; yet, for all that, his richly imaginative¹ prose is not unworthy of his subject. The part played by liberty in the great apostasy of the angels stands out more clearly in his account than in Milton's, which, as all the world knows, by a famous fault perhaps inherent in the Puritan position, unconsciously turns Satan into the hero of the struggle, and thus almost insensibly attracts the reader's sympathy away from God's side to the Devil's. For philosophically, if not poetically, it is of the first consequence to the verisimilitude of the story of the Fall from heaven that liberty in

¹ "Les images lui semblent venir naturellement à l'esprit," Delcourt, "Essai sur la langue de Sir Thomas More," p. 279.

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all its length, in all the fullness of its meaning, should be presented both as the condition of the catastrophe and the cause at stake. Sin, in other words, must be seen, not as the rejection of an arbitrary order, nor as the exercise of a legitimate right of choice, but as the refusal of that in which liberty itself consists, of the justice upon which liberty itself depends. As St. Augustine shows by the example of the mind of God, liberty in its perfect state has no place for wrong-choosing, but is at one with righteousness—is, in fact, as T. H. Green long afterwards argued, essentially a choice of right not wrong, not a choice between right and wrong. For the dignity, the true nature of angels and of men involves, not only choice, but the right choice; and to choose amiss is to fall into servitude. More shows this more clearly than Milton, and if there is any intellectual dilemma left, it can only be said that four centuries have done nothing to elucidate it. Berdyaev, for instance, in his recent discussion of the problem of evil,¹ will be found arguing that the question can only be at all properly considered in the light of freewill, and that so considered the price of liberty will be found to be the possibility of sin. But let us listen to More himself upon the earlier Fall that lies behind the Fall of Man:

“Standing thus in the liberty of themselves with those excellent beauteous gifts of their nature, and being by grace moved to turn unto God and love him and give him condign thanks for the same, great multitude (of angels) followed the instinct of grace, and so did, and were of God therefore exalted into the clear light of the Godhead and by grace confirmed and established in the full surety of joyful perfect bliss and everlasting glory.

“Lucifer on the other side, an angel of excellent

¹ “Freedom and the Spirit,” Chap. V.

brightness, wilfully letting slip the grace and aid of God wherewith he was stirred to look upward unto his maker, began in such wise to look down upon himself and so far forth to delight and dote in the regarding and beholding of his own beauty that, albeit he well wist he had a maker infinitely far above him, yet thought he himself to be his match. And as wise as he was of nature, yet pride made him so frantic that he boasted that he would be god's fellow indeed, saying unto himself. . . . I will ascend into the heaven above the stars of God. I will exalt my seat and will sit in the hill of the testament in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds, and I will be like unto the highest. But as he used this blasphemous presumption in his mind against the great majesty of God, he was suddenly cast out, and thrown down with an infinite number of the like traitorous angels, as the Prophet Esay toucheth him in these words. . . . How art thou fallen out of the heaven, Lucifer, that sprangest in the morning; thou art fallen into the earth!"

So, then, or somewhat so, we may conjecture that More and Henry talked as they gazed together into space and marked the stars moving in their courses across the sky.¹ "*Le silence de ces espaces infinis m'effraye,*" cries Pascal in the next century; and by then indeed those spaces had deepened to a terrifying degree, though not as we have seen one disproportionate to man's greatness and misery. But for More, and for Henry, as they made their modest observations from the Palace of Westminster, the wonders of the sky must have retained much of that old serenity and sense of proximity which had made their movements seem a mirror of mortal fortunes. Sun and moon might even, to the eye of fancy, appear to

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1271. The passage quoted is, however, of a later date (1534) than any possible conversation of the kind between More and Henry.

symbolise the spiritual and temporal Powers by which man's way across the world was lit, and man himself led forward; for Pope and Emperor had long seemed as indispensable to the illumination and guidance of the world as the two outstanding spheres in the high vault of heaven. And Henry, when Luther began his attempt to pull the Pope out of the European sky, felt, if possible, more certain than the most part of his subjects that the act was to the highest degree impious—more certain at that time even than the cautious councillor whom, in the same year (1521), when his own views upon the matter were published, he created Sir Thomas More. Here lies, at least for More's admirers, the primary interest of that famous "Defence of the Seven Sacraments" which, to the consummation of all irony, has provided Henry's successors, even to this day, with the title of Defender of a Faith which to profess would now exclude them from the throne.

Some, however, have doubted whether the "Defence" ("Assertio Septem Sacramentorum") was really the King's own work, and, as was said before, doubt in historical matters is never difficult to introduce, though often very hard to justify. The higher criticism of Henry's authorship has as much or as little value as some other criticism of the same kind, and, when a man has amused himself sufficiently with the suppositions that Erasmus or Fox or Fisher, or, for the matter of that, Lee or Gardiner or Pace, may have been the composer of the work, he may contentedly return to the plain probabilities of the case, and restore to the royal author, who at no time lacked interest or assurance in theological science, the credit of his excursion in theology. This is not to say that Henry never asked advice or allowed his Bishops to 'devil' for him, and certainly not to deny that he turned to More for such aid as one author may look for from another. But the extent of the obligation is fairly clear from More's

statement that, when the book was done, he himself sorted out and arranged the material. That might, of course, mean, as some have argued, merely the compilation of an alphabetical index; but this is, probably, to put More's contribution a little below the mark. Some criticism, at all events, we have reason to know, the great lawyer allowed himself. Sitting, it may be, in that traverse behind the altar of the royal chapel at Westminster whither Henry, upon holy days, after the royal devotions were done, would sometimes summon him for conversation, More, as Roper records, made an observation of much subsequent interest. "I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing," he said, "and that is this. The Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with all other Christian princes. It may, hereafter, so fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some points of the league whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best therefore that the place be amended and his authority more slenderly touched." "Nay," quoth his Grace, "that shall it not. We are so much bounden to the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honour to it."¹

Toute vérité, the French proverb reminds us, *n'est pas bonne à dire*. Now, what Henry had written about the Pope and what More was not particularly anxious at the time to see him say, was this: "Assuredly, if any one considers the memorials of history, he will find that for a long while now continuously from the pacification of the world, almost² all the Churches of the Christian World have obeyed the See of Rome. Further, even though the seat of Empire had passed to them, we shall find, nevertheless, that, except when in schism, the Grecians yielded

¹ Roper, p. 66.

² O'Donovan in his edition (1908) of the "*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*" translates "all," not apparently noticing that the Latin says "*plerasque omnes*."

to the Church of Rome what pertained to the ecclesiastical primacy. Blessed Jerome, in truth, very well shows how much deference he thought should be paid to the Roman See from the fact that, although no Roman, he confesses it to be enough for him if, when others disapproved, the Pope of Rome should approve his faith" . . . "How true," Henry proceeds to say a little later, "is that saying of the Apostle, 'Although I have prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so as to remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing.' From which charity Luther shows, not only how far he is by his mortal rage but, in trying to draw all men to perdition along with himself, by turning all away from the obedience of the Chief Bishop, thrice-bound though he be to him—as Christian, as priest and finally as little brother."

More follows and to much the same effect, but enough has been quoted. For the book is, of course, as its title shows, mainly occupied with the defence of the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, and there is no occasion to concern ourselves with Henry's doctrinal expositions, which follow with some fullness of expression the usual lines of Catholic dogma and discover an acquaintance both with Scripture and Tradition. It is, however, of some consequence to notice that Luther by this time (1521) had already shown, and Henry perceived that the attack upon the claim of the Pope was but the prelude to an attack upon the claim of the Sacraments, and especially upon the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The whole mystical life of the Church as men had understood it for fifteen centuries was thus imperilled. The Reformation would in due course make a travesty of Baptismal regeneration, produce varied and inconsistent versions of Eucharistic doctrine, cause Penance to be regarded with horror, insist upon Confirmation as a condition of Communion, make the indissolubility of

Marriage more than ever the sport of lawyers, confer Orders without descent or authority, and abolish or ignore Extreme Unction. But Henry was never persuaded to such things and, mainly because he was not persuaded to them, was able to keep the great majority of the English bishops behind him. To the end of his life, in fact, he maintained the most part of his Catholic positions,¹ over-riding rather than impugning the sacrament of marriage with the aid of pliable prelates or opportune executions; and this, even though he can be fairly accused of entertaining the thought of bigamy to gratify his prevailing passion and of accommodation with the Lutherans over Eucharistic doctrine to promote his foreign policy. But, more than all this, it is important to students of More's life to mark and inwardly digest the fact that in connection with the King's treatise in defence of the Seven Sacraments the issue between the Sovereign and his subject had been raised in such a way as to give their final conclusions all the value and interest imaginable. For the King, under what influences we shall see, presently went back upon his earlier view of the papal supremacy, and the Minister, under the influence of fuller study, presently advanced to a better understanding both of the basis and importance of the papal claims. We have their first thoughts here; their second thoughts will presently appear.

Of some men it is easy to say that they have so little thought out their religious position that the most trivial concussion will cause their theology to tremble and fall like a house of cards. But it could never be so said truthfully of Henry. With the solitary exception of James I, he was the most considerable theologian who ever sat upon the English throne; and his book needs only to be read to see that, amid all the reli-

¹ Some readers will be aware that the Abbé Constant and Mr. Belloc are here at issue with Dr. Messenger. The issue turns principally on the significance of the Ten Articles of 1536. Dr. Messenger's book "The Reformation, the Mass, and the Priesthood" has the advantage of fuller documentation.

gious confusion of the age, he had the advantage of an early and carefully-considered opinion. Few monarchs perhaps at any time have been intellectually more equal to their occasion. There is this further to be noticed. All the language that the King uses in defence of the Papacy proves, if it proves nothing else, how remote was the day when the English sovereign had had cause to resent the meddling of the Pope in his realm.

In face, however, of Mr. Barraclough's recent monograph on Papal Provisions, even this may be to say too little. What are we to think of all that our fathers have told us, when, for instance, we come across such a general judgment as this:—"From week to week and from day to day, even at those periods in which political questions demanded all their energies, the great popes of the thirteenth century issued a mass of legal decisions, which even to-day astonish us by their objectivity, their invariably high standard, their careful phraseology and their fine juristic sense"¹ Or what are we to make of the charge of papal avarice, when we are told by Mr. Barraclough that the historians of the nineteenth century "took . . . vehement criticism at its face value and that, when the actual documentary evidence was analysed, the small totals which the Papacy raised by its taxation aroused general surprise"² Or, again, how can we exaggerate the disastrous consequences for much old-fashioned criticism of the Papacy if modern critics should get the hang, as the phrase is, of the argument that papal provisions were, not the outcome of any deliberately acquisitive papal policy, but an expression of the renaissance of the Roman civil law in response to the general need of a more centralised control to check local abuses—were not, in fact, "powers taken by the papacy, but powers given to the papacy"³ and rested consequently upon general consent?

¹ Barraclough, "Papal Provisions," p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³ *Ibid.*, *passim*. and pp. 162, 166, 167.

However all this may be, the Statutes of Praemunire and Provisors had, it is clear from Henry's "Defence," done any work that was needed by the time that we are dealing with; and the English King could afford to give the Pope ungrudging ecclesiastical recognition because all improper or injudicious interference with English local liberties had ceased. Nevertheless, More's legal training caused him to detect an ambiguity incidental to the exercise of the papal power at that time. "The Pope," he said to the King in words already quoted, "as your Grace knoweth, is a prince." The Pope, in fact, had long been what might be called the constituting officer of a European federation. Rome, besides being the see of the Universal Bishop, was the seat of what we should call a league of nations, but what our ancestors thought of as Christendom. It was the Geneva of that time, and a more efficient Geneva. Not doubtful about the existence of God and not ashamed to confess Him before men, it was in a position to look for its sanctions to the ecclesiastical rather than the economic sphere. Excommunication and Interdict were called upon to play the part assigned nowadays to the impoverishment and malnutrition incidental to boycott and blockade; and there are those even to this day who might prefer to see these matters left to the tender mercies of God rather than to the tender mercies of men.

The association with secular authority on the part of the Papacy in the Middle Age, however necessary it may have been to the consolidation of society—and no one perhaps who has weighed the late Master of Balliol's judgment that "the Papacy, taking it all in all, was the greatest potentiality for good that existed at the time, or that perhaps ever has existed"¹ will doubt the necessity—constituted a grave difficulty for the Pope's spiritual mission. Ecclesiastics, indeed, everywhere, by becoming active and efficient states-

¹ A. L. Smith, "Church and State," p. 6.

men and dealing with administrative problems of great complexity, tended to cause confusion in men's minds between what was contingent and what was essential in their office; and this was sometimes true in respect of the Vicar of Christ. The infallible Doctor too easily assumed the look of an infallible Ruler. It was no doubt possible for a Pope to keep his eyes so high, his soul so humble, his aims so wide, and his hands so clean, that even failure would turn again to success and Calvary after Calvary of apparent defeat point the way to a Canossa beyond pride and beyond presumption. But not in every century was such virtue to be seen! Though Dante might celebrate the sufferings of Boniface VIII at Anagni as a new passion of Christ,¹ no one knew better than Dante that this "Prince of the new Pharisees"² had been the architect of his own misfortunes, and, though—to come to the times of Thomas More—Alexander VI may in the retrospect be hailed as one of the liberators of Italy³ and Julius II vindicated as "a sound patriot" perverted by circumstance,⁴ the world (and not only the worldly world) saw clearly enough that the one was largely concerned to promote the fortunes of his son, the other to defend the possessions of his principality.

Is it, then, to be wondered at that More, seeing as much as he did at this time of diplomacy and of the seamy side of diplomacy, and seeing it, moreover, through contact with one who was, not merely the accredited representative (*legatus a latere*) in England of the Papal Court, but also the calculating exponent of a new English foreign policy conceived on ultramontane lines, should have hesitated to approve any advertisement of the papal claims? For, though we are so apt to forget it, he was at this time a distinguished diplomatist and, as both Giustiani⁵ and Contarini discovered when, in

¹ "Purg.," XX, 87.

² "Inf.," XXVII, 85.

³ "Camb. Mod. Hist.," I, pp. 229, 333.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁵ "Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII," II, pp. 215, 216.

the capacity of Venetian envoys they tried to pump him, the most discreet of men. "I invited an English gentleman, by name, Master Thomas More, a very learned man, to dine with me," observes the latter in his report of August 19th, 1521, to his Government, ". . . but he did not drop the least hint of any other treaty than that of peace between the King of France and his Imperial Majesty." Yet in fact, whether More knew it or not, Wolsey at this very time and under papal influence was weaving—to borrow Skelton's punning phrase—a web of linsey-woolsey around the King of France which some months later was disclosed to view. No man, at least as his colleagues knew him in counsel, was, indeed, less disposed than the Cardinal to adopt a policy of masterly inactivity. His hands were always busy; and he would meet those who thought there was strength in sitting still by quoting a fable which told of a country where the rain in falling turned men into fools and where the wise, therefore, hid themselves in caves, hoping in this way to gain the mastery, only, however, to find that the fools held on to the government.¹ It was a feeble and, if meant to vindicate meddling, a foolish fable, and More's reflection upon it at the close of his life—that it had proved very costly to the nation²—was as good a criticism of Wolsey's spectacular triumphs as it was good evidence of More's English common sense. Neither Pope nor Cardinal understood how large a part integrity and probity must play in the diplomatic rôle their central positions assigned to them. To bow from side to side is not the way to hold scales even; and both Renaissance Rome and Tudor England had yet to learn that an honest head and a steady hand are the conditions of a well-balanced policy. Under the guidance of her wisest ministers England is never the busybody on the European board, but that detached and oftentimes silent member, whose opinion, if given, is

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1436.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1436.

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clear, whose arm is strong, and who is found in her place on the day of decision. "Never in my life was I more glad to hear of anything than I was to hear of your father's death," observed Bismark to Clarendon's daughter. For "if your father had lived," he went on hastily to explain, "he would have prevented the [Franco-Prussian] War."¹ Here, if the story is accurate, is some evidence of what British policy can seem even to one of the most capable and cynical of diplomatic experts. But Wolsey's eyes were bent upon glory, and not upon peace. Time wore his policy threadbare and uncovered its nakedness. He had not inspired, and he had not deserved to inspire confidence; though in that he was, doubtless, little worse than his fellows. In 1529 Charles settled his differences with Francis, leaving Wolsey no better than a *tertius dolens*; and in the same year the discredited Minister, as it chanced or followed, fell from power. If this was not precisely cause and effect, one might call it at least a likely event consequent upon a favourable condition.

More, we may feel certain, watched with scant sympathy this ten-years English bid for European power. His remark, already quoted, is evidence enough to show how little his mind went with the two men—the King and the Cardinal—between whom it was at one time his fate to act as a daily channel of diplomatic communication, only, perhaps, to be snubbed by Henry if he ventured upon a word of advice.² All the vast expenditure entailed by such pomp and circumstance as went to the making of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where he attended, and met and made friends with Budé, the scholar and numismatist, but of which he has left little or no account, could give but poor satisfaction to any mind capable of perceiving that the spectacle was no better than a passing show, already largely discounted in

¹ Maxwell, "Life and Letters of Clarendon," II, p. 366.

² State Papers, Henry VIII, I, Pt. i, No. CXL (1528), p. 286.

diplomatic value by the Emperor's recent visit to the King and shortly to be discounted again by the King's visit to the Emperor.

In a sense beyond this, however, such glories were, as a poet was presently to proclaim in language of delicate sensibility, rather shadows than substantial things; and More was the very man to feel it. It may have been as he watched the golden pageant between Guines and Ardres in the summer of 1520 or, perhaps, whilst England in the spring of the following year was all agog with the news of the trial and death of Buckingham—a great opponent of these Anglo-French amenities and on that account, if on no other, obnoxious to the Cardinal—that there entered into his mind the idea of writing a treatise upon the Four Things which rank as the last in this world and the first in another. Pressure of work or failure of imagination caused him to leave the book unfinished, and in the fragmentary form in which it has reached us the essay, occupied as it is only with death and deadly sins, consorts none too comfortably with other memories of its gracious and gay composer. Had the project been pushed on to its intended conclusion, had reflections upon death and doom led up to discussions of the place in human life of pain and joy, balance and proportion would doubtless have come into the completed design. But, as it is, we move through the vasty halls of death only to emerge with something perilously like a macabre reminiscence. None the less for that the frescoes on the walls may be said to show the hand of an artist. It is, in looking at them, as if Hogarth had slipped into the Campo Santo at Pisa—as if some acute observer had visualised with pitiless realism not only the sunken features of this world, but the death's head of the next. Even, however, if read merely as an example of early Tudor writing, More's description of a death-bed scene, his comparison of life to a prison, and his drama-

tisation of time as an executioner's cart, will well repay attention. The cadences of that forgotten prose fall upon the ear like a long-drawn-out lament, yet with such a promise in them of solemn music as is later to be heard in Donne's famous sermons. Listen, then, to a few sentences, for in no period of English history, perhaps, has Death exercised a greater power over the human imagination than in the days of the Tudors and the Stuarts and in this supreme visualisation of it as the King of Terrors More is something of a master:—

“Have ye not ere this in a sore sickness felt it very grievous to have folk babble to you, and namely such things as ye should make answer to, when it was a pain to speak. Think ye not now that it will be a gentle pleasure when we lie dying, all our body in pain, all our mind in trouble, our soul in sorrow, our heart all in dread, while our life walketh awayward, while our death draweth toward, while the devil is busy about us, while we lack stomach and strength to bear any one of so manifold heinous troubles—will it not be, as I was about to say, a pleasant thing to see before thine eyes and hear at thine ear a rabble of fleshly friends or rather of flesh-flies skipping about thy bed and thy sick body like ravens about thy corpse, now almost carrion, crying to thee on every side ‘What shall I have?’ ‘What shall I have?’ Then shall come thy children and cry for their parts. Then shall come thy sweet wife, and where in thy health haply she spake thee not one sweet word in six weeks, now shall she call thee sweet husband and weep with much worth and ask thee what shall she have. Then shall thine executors ask for the keys, and ask what money is owing thee, ask what substance thou hast, and ask where thy money lieth. And while thou liest in that case, their words shall be so tedious that thou

wilt wish all that they ask for upon a red fire, so that thou mightest lie one half hour in rest."¹

An ugly scene, which will cause some to think of Tolstoi's "Death of Ivan Ilyitch" and is at any rate apposite enough, as we have seen, to the action of the collective conscience of the community! If the graveyard gives no longer upon the funeral-feast, if the lawyer moves no more with will in hand into the centre of the scene, the State still flaps its wings with increasing energy about a death-bed, waiting, like some hideous bird of prey, with outstretched beak and clutching claw to fasten on the goods of the departed to the prejudice of those he loves and leaves. 'My country, *what* I leave my country!' would in fact appear to be the approved emendation of an ancient text.

Let no young man, rejoicing in his youth, flatter himself that as yet Death concerns him not. More has too good a sense of time to leave him with that illusion:—

"If there were two both condemned to death," continues the monitory voice, "both carried out at once toward execution; of which two the one were sure that the place of his execution were within one mile, the other twenty mile off, yea an hundred an ye will—he that were in the cart to be carried an hundred mile would not take much more pleasure than his fellow in the length of his way notwithstanding that it were an hundred times as long as his fellow's and that he had thereby an hundred times as long to live, being sure and out of all question to die at the end. . . . But what if there were to the place of your execution two ways, of which the one were four-score mile further about than your fellow's, the other nearer by five mile than his, and when ye were put in the cart (ye) had warning of both and though ye were showed

¹ "De Quattuor Novissimis," Engl. Works, p. 78.

that it were likely that ye should be carried the longer way, yet it might hap ye should go the shorter, and whether ye were carried the one or the other ye should never know till ye came to the place. I trow ye could not in this case make much longer of your life than of your fellow's. Now in this case are we all. . . . And thus shall ye well see that thou hast no cause to look upon thy death as a thing far off, but a thing undoubtedly nigh thee and ever walking with thee. By which not a false imagination but a very true contemplation thou shalt behold him, and advise him such as he is, and thereby take occasion to flee vain pleasures of the flesh that keep out the very pleasures of the soul."¹

And what, then, of the pride of life? Listen yet once again:—

"If thou shouldest perceive that one were earnestly proud of the wearing of a gay golden gown while the lorel² playeth the lord in a stage play, wouldest thou not laugh at his folly, considering that thou art very sure that, when the play is done, he shall go walk a knave in his old coat. Now thou thinkest thyself wise enough while thou art proud in thy player's garment and forgettest that, when thy play is done, thou shalt go forth as poor as he. . . . We shall leave the example of plays and players which be too merry for this matter. I shall put thee a more earnest image of our condition, and that not a feigned similitude, but a very true fashion and figure of our worshipful estate. Mark this well, for of this thing we be very sure that old and young, man and woman, rich and poor, prince and page, all the while we live in this world we be but prisoners and be in a sure prison out of which there can no man escape. . . .

¹ Engl. Works, p. 82.

² Rogue.

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¹ Engl. Works, p. 82.

² Rogue.

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The prison is large and many prisoners in it, but the jailor can [re]lease none. He is so present in every place that we can creep into no corner out of his sight. For, as holy David saith to this jailor 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit and whither shall I flee from thy face?': as who saith no whither. There is no remedy, therefore, but, as condemned folk and remediless, in this prison of the earth we drive forth awhile, some bound to a post, some wandering about, some in the dungeon, some in the upper ward, some building the bowers and making palaces in the prison, some weeping, some laughing, some labouring, some playing, some singing, some chiding, some fighting, no man almost remembering in what case he standeth, till that suddenly, nothing less looking for, young, old, poor, and rich, merry and sad, prince, page, pope and poor soul-priest, now one, now other, some time a great rabble at once, without order, without respect of age or of estate, all stripped stark naked and shifted out in a sheet, be put to death in divers wise in some corner of the same prison and even there thrown in an hole, and either worms eat him under ground or crows above. . . . Ye be proud of the arms of your ancestors set up in the prison: and all your pride is because ye forget it is a prison. For if ye took the matter aright, the place a prison, yourself a prisoner condemned to death from which ye cannot escape, ye would reckon this gere¹ as worshipful as if a gentleman thief, when he should go to Tyburn, would leave for a memorial the arms of his ancestors painted on a post in Newgate."²

In such manner does More envisage the first of those four last things, of which there have been found men to doubt

¹ *i.e.* this action.

² Engl. Works, p. 84.

all the rest, but never this one. What he would have made of Judgment, of Hell and of Heaven, and whether his shrewd artist's mind would have proved as well equal to the task of depicting them we can only speculate. As matters turned out, it fell to a very different genius in a very different period to give them literary expression in the English tongue. Addison's supposed trance in Sheer Lane after he had wandered through Lincoln's Inn Gardens,¹ coupled with the more famous piece of writing that goes by the name of Mirzah's Vision,² say as well as it can be said, what many an Englishman likes to feel about these 'last curiosities,' and say it with all the grace and serenity of the English Augustans. Judgment there weighs out its sentences with fantasy and humour; Heaven proves a green island in a summer sea; and Hell is hid in cloudland. The Age of Anne could afford the luxury of soft scenes and the charm of cool colours. But when More was writing, the atmosphere was surcharged with storm, and Death already stalked abroad, shaping his terrors. A poet's eye, indeed, might already have spotted him in the woods marking off young growth for future use as block or faggot or Tyburn Tree, and making ready to lay his icy hand and icier axe on kings. More, then, did well to look him full in the face in the quiet of the study. For this mortal was, as we know, to meet mortality upon no feather-bed.

¹ *Tatler*, No. 100 (Nov. 29th, 1709).

² *Spectator*, No. 159 (Sept. 1st, 1711).

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THE history of our own time is well calculated to assist in the elucidation of that new orientation of ideas which began with the early sixteenth century, for upon our age, as Berdyaev has well seen, have all the ends of the Renaissance come. Amongst the mass of phenomena thus rendered ripe for review there is none perhaps that strikes the eye more forcibly than the German Reformation. From the date of Katharine of Aragon's so-called divorce right up to the Great War circumstances tended almost continuously to impress the merit of the German outlook upon the English imagination. It was not only that Luther led the great revolt against Popery, and that Popery, as the years went on and as plots, some real and one at least fictitious, thickened, became increasingly obnoxious to the English mind, but that during the repeated efforts of the British to keep the French domination of Europe within bounds, the Germans proved our natural allies, giving us in turn a Eugene for our Marlborough, a Frederick for our Wolfe, and a Blücher for our Wellington; that, when the Stuarts failed, Hanover supplied us with a dynasty; that the Protestant succession gave birth to a long series of matrimonial connections with the royal houses of Germany; and, finally, that our men of letters, not less than our higher critics, turned to German poetry and philosophy and criticism—to Goethe and Schiller, to Kant and Hegel, to Strauss and Harnack, in full confidence of finding there inspiration or information superior to the rest. It became thus more agreeable to see ourselves as primarily and pre-

eminently an off-shoot of the German stock and our words and works as drawing their ethos pre-eminently from German sources, even though there were circumstances pointing another way, our civilisation having been in the first instance implanted by the Romans, the Church initiated, at least in the organised form which the primacy of Canterbury preserves, by a mission from Rome, and our political unity consolidated by Northmen indeed, but by Northmen bringing French tongues in their mouths and French fashions in their ships and Plantagenet kings in their wake.

How exaggerated this Teutonic orientation of English thought became during the nineteenth century, we can gather not only from listening to the loud rhapsodies of Carlyle, playing Prussian music on his Goethe-strung harp, but, and much better, by glancing at such a book as Dean Church's "Gifts of Civilisation," where a singularly temperate and judicious writer is to be found crediting the German soul with some especial regard for law and some peculiar proficiency in truth. It needed the shameful exposures of the Great War, with all its antecedents and consequents, to show the high place which megalomania and hysteria and ruthless disregard of others' rights and feelings have in the German character—defects profoundly opposed to any real love of truth or regard for justice, whilst not, of course, incompatible with much talent and forcefulness.

Something of the same suspicion now attaching to the German soul in general may with our changed feelings probably be found to attach also to one once reputed the greatest soul amongst his countrymen. In England until lately Luther still shone with all the brittle glory of the Reformation. Take, by way of example, the casual tribute paid to his memory by the youngest of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers. "To some," wrote Rosebery, "it may appear a profanation to compare Fox with the German apostle of light and freedom.

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But with his passion, his courage, his openness, his flashes of imagination, his sympathetic errors, above all his supreme humanity, Fox was a sort of lax Luther, with the splendid faults and qualities of the great reformer."¹ Thus and thus could Luther, then, be portrayed in a society too sure of itself to doubt that liberty was the last word in religion, in politics and even in life itself, too indolent, perhaps, to think out what real liberty involves in moral virtue and mental discipline, and too ready to take for granted that Luther was the incarnation of freedom and Renaissance Rome the very seat and centre of tyranny and oppression. Yet scarcely, except in a world where even the Whig interpretation of history lay at the mercy of the Protestant, would a comparison have been instituted between the too-easy English gentleman and the too-obstinate German churl, and a comparison, moreover, where the honours were conceded to the latter. Whether either the one or the other would have wholly appreciated the intended compliment we need not, however, stop to inquire. It is enough that it exemplifies admirably the Lutheran legend as it appeared in English nineteenth-century mythology, and that we need to be quit of its confusions. If Fox in august Whig circles still appears in the light of some kind of a Luther, Luther does not merit to be reputed any kind of a Fox. It is a late Lutheran apologist who assures us that in his essential nature Luther represents "the perfect antithesis of the type of character which has gradually developed since the sixteenth century and is still regarded as a normal embodiment of a good European," and then adds that, as Luther is the perfect antithesis of the gentleman, the *bourgeois* and the good citizen, so by these types of men he will never be rightly understood.² Be it so, then, if it be so, and let us all—fine gentlemen

¹ Rosebery, "Pitt," p. 31.

² Boehmer, "Luther" (Engl. tr.), p. 237.

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and honest *bourgeois* and plain proletarian souls alike—agree to bear with what fortitude we may our social estrangement from the great Reformer not less than our crass inability to comprehend, as he really was, the real Luther beheld of the professor. Enough for our purpose here, if the Luther who looks at us through the face of the facts should be the same that at his first beginning roused the fierce ire of the English King, yet by his latter end had brought within range of his wide spiritual influence the English kingdom.

That re-orientation of Sovereign and people, even if susceptible of simple and all-too-familiar explanations, illustrates effectively the enigmatic character of the man with whom we have to deal—a man beyond doubt with two faces; to some a hero, to others a devil; to some eyes a towering genius, to others a pathological case. The contradictions of his nature, even without the contradictions of our theological differences to drive them home, may on close inspection appear, in fact, wellnigh intolerable; so pious is he and yet so proud; so critical and yet so credulous; so confident and yet so confused; so brave and yet so ill-conditioned; so pleasant to his friends, but to his foes so bitter; so bold to rebuke vice in one quarter, so ready to condone it in another; so busy with the things of God, and so great a busybody in the affairs of men. Only perhaps if we make up our minds that a lack of integrity, in the true meaning of that word, is a proof of humanity—of humanity, that is, when fallen from grace—shall we understand what makes him so sympathetic to certain minds. In its acquired sense, but in no other, he was no doubt truly and profoundly human. For he not only misconceived the nature of the Fall of Man, but constantly illustrated its disastrous confusions, whilst his conduct not infrequently proved as unequal to the burden of his self-imposed censorship as that of some earlier Renaissance Popes to the burden of their traditional office.

In this, it may no doubt be said, Luther was no exception to other protagonists of reform. Macaulay once amused himself by noting that the Reformation in England was the work of four persons, of whom three were murderers—Henry, who murdered his wives; Somerset, who murdered his brother, and Elizabeth, who murdered her guest;¹ and one might, with as much or as little injustice and effect, remark that the Reformation outside England was accomplished by Luther, who justified bigamy² and exhorted to slaughter;³ by Knox, who approved of assassination,⁴ and by Calvin, who caused Servetus to be burnt, not as a civic precaution, but as a spiritual delight. Of this unlovely group Luther was beyond doubt the most lovable; yet a man less fitted by nature or by grace to deserve the confidence of those who in this world of baffling antinomies see truth as a fine edge of light it might be hard to discover. How he, and such as he, should, with no better equipment for the purpose than the doctrine of justification by faith, have been able intellectually to dominate half Europe, divide it from the rest, and, if the phrase may pass, divert its destiny, is, on any rational view of human intelligence, not the least exacting problem in the Reformation puzzle.

Not reason, however, which he was not incapable of contemning in gross terms, but dramatic instinct was Luther's strong suit in the great German game with Rome. "The only genuinely dramatic nature in German history!" suggests Zweig⁵ in speaking of him. And, if that be to go too far, it is at least true that Luther possessed a marked capacity for seeing himself like some melodramatic figure in Wagnerian opera as the cynosure upon which the eyes of God, of Germany and in truth of the Devil were fixed. In the thunderstorm scene

¹ Essay on Hallam's "Constitutional History."

² In the case of Philip of Hesse.

³ In the case of the revolted peasantry.

⁴ In Beaton's case.

⁵ Zweig, "Erasmus," p. 137 (Engl. tr.).

which appears as the proximate cause of his rash monastic vows—a scene with which Melanchthon, his *fidus Achates*, appears to have been significantly unacquainted¹—in the closet scene at Wittenberg, where after long travail his soul is satisfied by the special illumination which set his fears at rest and showed him that man, subject to the election of God, is justified by faith alone; and again both in the chamber scene at Augsburg when he faces the Papal Legate and in the more famous scene in the hall at Worms when, brave man that he was, he faces Emperor and Diet in all their power, Luther walks his stage, in fact or at least in subsequent fancy, with something of the genius of a great actor, engaged in mental fight amidst the clamour of exterior circumstance. And as his adversities grow to the size of his spiritual requirements, so do his adversaries. Not unlike the Knight of La Mancha, he invests the forces that oppose him both with a moral wickedness and with a monstrous form quite beyond their deserts. Popes appear to him in the light of anti-Christ; theologians take on the look of hogs; and the devil goes about to devour him in the guise of a hell-hound. As for Rome, he sees it, of course, as neither more nor less than the great whore seated upon the Seven Hills.² Watch him for a moment as he walks there in the winter of the year 1510—a young man not yet thirty. Watch him with his ecclesiastical *schwärmerei*, presently destined to turn into something akin to anti-clerical *schadenfreude*. Watch him as he rushes—in the words of his staid Scottish biographer,³ “like a fanatic from one church to another in the hunt for indulgences”; watch him as he climbs the Scala Sancta for the sake of his grandfather’s salvation and wishes his parents dead that he might do as much for them; and, then, consider

¹ See on this Mackinnon, “Luther and the Reformation,” I, p. 33.

² Rev. xvii. 9.

³ Mackinnon, “Luther and the Reformation,” I, p. 143.

what reactions against levity or the look of it there must have been for this German soul whom the Roman clergy mocked at for the slowness with which he said his Mass. For even the best balanced minds among us have in the religious, as in the secular life, their hours of reaction; and those reactions may be expected to be so much the more violent in men, who, like Luther, conceive religion as a state of feeling "awakened and fed by some agency working through the spirit."¹ Even as he reaches the end of his intercession for the soul of his grandfather at the summit of the Sacred Staircase, some doubt as to the efficacy of the whole proceeding seems to have crossed his mind, and the emotional energy that had carried him up the ascent to have ended in a recessional, of which the reactionary force may be guessed from the fierceness of his attack upon indulgences some few years later.

For that attack, as everyone now recognises, there was room. Indulgences, when they are rooted in some spot of the devout life where sinner and saint have met and kissed and the filthy garments of the one been cloaked by the shining apparel of the other, possess the poetry of flowers; yet their fruit, if anyone should try to pluck it off a plant unwatered by the rains of penitence, tastes hard and bitter. It is one thing for a man who has confessed his sins in love or fear and felt what sorrow he may for them, to look to the merits of the saints or the superabundant merits of Christ to make up the measure of his satisfactions. It is another thing to seek to commute the penalties of the living or the dead by putting a penny—or, for the matter of that, a thousand pounds—in the slot and pulling out a pardon. And this was what Luther supposed, and, so far as indulgences for the dead were concerned, seems rightly to have supposed, that

¹ Cf. Boehmer, "Luther," p. 267. "The realisation that religion is a state of feeling which can only be awakened and nourished by an agency working through the spirit, is Luther's most fruitful discovery."

Tetzel had done on the occasion of the memorable Mainz indulgence of March 31st, 1515. There were purchasers of Tetzel's wares who ignorantly believed, and were apparently by him encouraged to believe, that by their purchases they effectively rescued their departed friends from the pains of purgatory—that, in fact, to quote the famous doggerel, "So soon as the coin in the coffer rang, The soul from purgatory sprang."

Here was indeed a cheap-jack manipulating a jack-in-the box. For, as a well-accredited modern writer puts it, "The Church has no jurisdiction in purgatory" and "No Pope or Bishop can by an act of authority directly lessen the length of stay in purgatory of anyone."¹ An indulgence for the dead is, in fact, in Pastor's language, "nothing else than a solemn form of prayer for the dead."² Just, indeed, because it was that and no more than that, the usual obligations of contrition and confession were not held to be necessary, and there arose a misunderstanding which the circumstances and perhaps even the terms of the indulgence countenanced and which Tetzel was at no trouble to correct. But there is the less need to debate the case that at the very height of the controversy and in the Leipzig disputation, Luther himself declared that, in regard to indulgences, he was almost in agreement with Eck, the Catholic champion.³

The fact, of course, remains that the Mainz indulgence, as published, was a scandal, and was made no better by the circumstance that, in spite of an official declaration allocating the proceeds to the building of St. Peter's, the young Archbishop of Mainz, already a double-dyed pluralist, was taking half-profits from the transaction. His name as the tempter of an easy-going Pontiff and the fleecer of an ill-instructed flock deserves in reality a deeper obloquy than that which rests

¹ J. P. Arendzen, "What Becomes of the Dead?" p. 118.

² Pastor, "History of the Popes," VII, p. 335.

³ See on this Mackinnon, "Luther and the Reformation," II, p. 142.

upon the direct agent of this unlovely commerce. Tetzl, however, is not likely at this distance of time to be able to shift the burden of blame; yet he may well have been, according to the standards of to-day, not at all a bad sort of man, and even temperamentally akin to those industrious philanthropists of our own time who rest not day nor night from their labours and whose praise is in the post-box. He concerned himself, as they concern themselves, more with cash results than with charitable dispositions. He assumed, as they assume, that to raise money for good objects is to sanctify certain more or less questionable methods of raising it. And he thought no worse than they do of certain deductions or percentages of which no mention is made or at least to which no prominence is given. In a word, he treated indulgences for the dead not so differently perhaps from the way in which a later age treats bridge-drives, or sweepstakes, or bazaars, or even royal personages. Springes, all of them, to catch such woodcocks as do not fall guilelessly to the gun!

Tetzl and all his kind should, then, on this showing, be reckoned, less as representative of their own time, than of all time, and their ways, not as peculiar to pardoners and friars, but as common to man. Some part of their failings at least they certainly shared with many notable collectors of the unrighteous mammon; and some part they owed to the persistent desire of mankind to do good, whilst hoping to make sure of something again, even if that something be only relief from further importunity. For all that, the Council of Trent very properly swept them away, stigmatising them as persons of irreformable depravity and requiring all indulgences thenceforward to be published under proper supervision and in such circumstances as should make it plain that the practice itself existed "not for gain, but for godliness."¹ But abuses die hard; and there are those who discover in the

¹ Waterworth, "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent," p. 151.

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issue of the so-called "bula di difuntos" in Spain¹ a lingering instance of the old misconception.

Luther then had rendered Christendom some lasting service by his attack upon Tetzl and, had he been content to rest upon his laurels, he might have secured much praise as a reformer. He was not so content. In the tower at Wittenberg, amidst surroundings so incongruous that the coarsest malice could ask no more of circumstance, he had satisfied himself of the rectitude of an opinion that nobody now perhaps really believes, or at least that few would nowadays care to advocate. His mind was indeed so confused and his words were so many that with the best will in the world one may fail to be fair to him; but the impression he gave was something of this sort. In opposition to the teaching of St. James, though, so he supposed, in accordance with the teaching of St. Paul, he held that justification is by faith alone or, in other words, that faith is all and that works are worthless. To confirm his own opinion or that of his disciples, he presently added a little to the text of the Pauline passage that bears upon the subject—a word and no more, yet a word of some consequence and a word that he could not be persuaded to withdraw. St. Paul had written, to cite the Anglican Revised version of 1881, that he reckoned a man to be "justified by faith apart from the works of the law."² Luther's Bible, by inserting the word "only" after "faith," had therefore the effect, as one of his compatriots has happily expressed it, of "twisting the truth of an all-operative God into the proposition of an alone-operative God."³

Here was a twist indeed—a twist sufficient to switch the Reformer out of the tracks trodden by the feet of fifteen centuries and into that eerie forest where problems of

¹ Upon this the reader will find some information in Fr. Thurston's C.T.S. pamphlet "Indulgences for Sale," p. 23.

² Rom. iii. 28.

³ Karl Adam, "The Son of God," p. 41.

free-will and necessity perplex the mind and all the trees of liberty are lost to sight in a vast woodland of predestination. It was but a short way forward from a belief that works are without merit in the sight of God to a loss of faith in human freedom altogether; and Luther took this, as we say, in his stride. He was moving, perhaps, partly by the light of a philosophy of history which he had mistaken for a map of life. His studies in the Epistle to the Romans had made him familiar with the Pauline image of the Divine Potter shaping nations and kings like vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour—Israel into a chosen people, Edom into a disinherited race, Egypt into a sign of secular impotence before spiritual power—and he transferred the underlying thought from its native place in the vast drama of the world's redemption to the alien sphere where men and women play out the single acts of their private lives, thus confounding the idea of an overruling providence with that of an inexorable fate. It did not, it is true, altogether escape his eye that St. Paul had affirmed categorically that God willed all men to be saved; but he was content to meet the objection by a paraphrase declaring that God willed all men to be "assisted," whilst leaving the precise significance of that term in a rather disingenuous obscurity.¹ In the last analysis, however, as he saw the subject after his mind had come to a conclusion with the aid of his experience in the tower at Wittenberg, men appear in his theological teaching as no more than puppets, appointed, by the arbitrary fiat of God and without any choice of their own in the matter, to eternal joy or grief. And if, impotent in will and incapable of merit, they should complain of their formation or their fate, Luther is not in a position to give them any better advice, in spite of this being, in his view, in flat contradiction with God's real and secret

¹ I Tim. ii. 3; cf. Grisar, "Luther," II, p. 238 (in Hammond's translation).

counsels, than to delude themselves into a belief in a revealed will of God consonant with the idea of human freedom.

Such in its essence, meaning and outcome is the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and Luther might have liked it less, if he had not been able to convince himself that he at any rate was among the elect. Salvation—his own salvation—he had always passionately cared about; and the interpretation given by him to the verse in Romans (i. 17)¹ which his conviction made famous, enabled him to have it, so to say, for the asking. Faith he had; and faith was all he seemed to himself to have need of.

Doubtless there was that in Luther's religious fervour which less forceful souls have cause to envy. If his kind of mysticism lacked the humility and charity that form by general consent the primary conditions of true mystical experience, it set at least a substantial value on spiritual things and accorded them a genuine precedence. Yet no one, perhaps, will look long at Luther's theology and doubt that there is in it something lacking, even though the nature of the missing element may be less obvious than its absence.

We live in a time, if a platitude may be excused, when much that was deemed axiomatic and much also that was postulated in Luther's view of human conditions is denied or doubted. There are some who carry credulity to its highest power by supposing, not merely that their spiritual organisms are the casual product of atoms in eccentric agitation, but that their sublimest thoughts are without relation to reality and their inalterable affections without sense or significance. Such scepticism as this never darkened Luther's horizon. God, and his soul, and a gulf to be bridged between God and his soul—these seemed to him luminous and self-evident truths. But another idea, now sometimes called in question,

¹ "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith."

was implicit in his philosophy. He conceived it to need no proof that Man had fallen from a high estate into his present condition. At this point, no doubt, the intellectual air nowadays needs clearing, for a mist has once more settled upon the face of Eden. Science, it is sometimes said, knows no Fall; and indeed there seems to be no particular reason why it should do so. If anything fell, it was man's spirit, and not man's body; and physical science is concerned with matter and motion. Luther, however, though moving in a world only half realised, was yet profoundly conscious of that which some modern science doubts or denies. He was more aware than most men of that profound disintegration of human personality to which so many minds have at different times and in divers ways borne witness and to which St. Paul has given a classical expression, repeatedly echoed, and an acute diagnosis, repeatedly verified. "For I know," so the passage runs in its familiar English clothing, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii).

So far in understanding Luther had gone with the Apostle; and then, still following as he supposed, on to a debtors' prison where the claims against him on account of sin were vicariously met and whence he emerged with his liabilities discharged. In other words, by reason of his faith in Christ, sin was no more imputed; and he seemed to himself to be set free. Yet, on his own showing, he had lost nothing of his evil nature and learnt nothing of the freedom of the sons



MARTIN LUTHER, 1520

After the drawing by Lucas Cranach.

of God. The ban laid upon the mystical life of the soul by original sin had never in his theology been truly lifted. The image of the second Adam, of the Heavenly Man—to use the figure which the mystics took from the Pauline theology—could not in his view be really substituted in the soul for that of the first. Notwithstanding all his love of the austere little manual that goes by the name of the “*Theologia Germanica*,” with its comfortable assurance that man can indeed become godlike and a partaker of the divine nature,¹ Luther appears to have missed the mystic’s inmost secret. Human Nature, as he thought of it, could by no means recover from the Fall. Bad it was and bad it remained, so that its works were of no value, even though a man’s soul was saved. Not so had the saints and sages understood these things! They perceived, indeed, that man had been deeply wounded by the Fall, his integrity shattered, and his hope of beholding the beatific vision of God shut off. Yet they did not mistake the withdrawal of divine grace for the utter ruin of human nature. The essence of the lapse in Eden, like the essence of Evil itself, seemed to them rather a privative than a positive thing, and they discovered the fullness of regeneration, not in the remission of debt, but in the restoration of sonship. Even here and now, in moments of sublime love or sacramental significance man might regain his birthright and walk again with God in a communion so intimate as to invite the thought of unity. “I live, yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me,”² cries the voice that Luther had heard so often and so imperfectly. “Brethren, now are we the sons of God,” declares an, if possible, still deeper visionary, “but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.”³

Fallen man, as we see him drawn in the pages of the medieval mystics and their apostolic masters, is, in fact, no being utterly depraved, but even still much what Hamlet makes

¹ Chap. xxxii.

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ I John iii. 2.

him—a gracious creature, noble in reason, infinite in faculty, expressive and admirable in form and motion, in action angelic, in apprehension godlike, and needing only the influx of divine grace to restore his powers to true spiritual activity. Justification by faith alone neither postulates nor permits him any such nature, and, where that doctrine has secured real assent or taken firm hold of the mind, its effects are much what might be looked for. It was, we may feel sure, no accident that made Calvinist and Puritan so readily turn to the Old Testament for religious phraseology and inspiration! For there they found man more nearly as, theologically speaking, they thought of him—still groping for truth, still awaiting the revelation of the sons of God. It was no lack of insight in Matthew Arnold, but much the reverse, that led him to speak¹ of Luther as “the Philistine of genius” in religion, to give to Cromwell and Bunyan the same distinction, the former in politics, the latter in literature; and to characterise all three as “Germanic.”² For it is still perhaps in Germany that the desolating results of Luther’s incomplete diagnosis of man’s state may most easily be traced—in the reaction, for example, of the young Goethe, so strikingly described in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*³ against the lack of depth and the paucity of sacraments in the Protestant religion with its sequence in the tormenting sense of disintegration so vividly described in *Faust*;⁴ or again in the ugly premise of Hegel’s “Logic” that “man is evil by nature and (that) it is an error to imagine he could ever be otherwise,”⁵ with its ugly issue in the two polluted streams of Prussian and Marxian Socialism that take their rise alike in Hegelian hills.

“Luther,” observes one of the most penetrating publicists

¹ In the essay on Falkland.

² *Ibid.*

³ Part II, Book 7.

⁴ Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust, Die eine will sich von der andern trennen (“Faust,” Pt. I, 112–113).

⁵ “Logic” (tr. Wallace), Chap. II, § 24.

of our time, "had his moment—a single moment only—of high truth; his urgent need of spiritual liberation. Tragically it was by a negation that he quitted the true path."¹ By a negation, indeed! By the greatest of all human negations—the negation of liberty itself, both mystical and rational. He was, in fact, estopped, as we have seen, by his own teaching from believing in it. Predestination coupled with the utter disparagement of good works left no place in life for freedom at all. And men in the circumstances took quite naturally and reasonably to such idolatries and servitudes as had tempted the imagination of the Hebrews—to the worship of the golden calf or the wish for a king who should represent, not moral righteousness, but unmoral power. And Luther, though he never dreamed of the materialism of Marx or the militarism of Prussia, lived long enough to furnish a candid witness against himself by declaring that people in general were becoming "more infamous, more avaricious, more unmerciful, more unchaste and in every way worse than they were under Popery,"² and that even the Evangelicals were "seven times worse than before."³

Such assertions, doubtless, are, like the father that begot them, full of impetuosity and violence—too full, indeed, to be fairly used in a controversial case where both sides have much to repent of. What, however, they may not unjustly be cited to show is how certainly Protestantism has from the first derived its moral vigour, not from excellence in virtue so much as from opposition to vice. It labelled itself correctly. It protested, and protested as justly, against certain things that went on in Rome as some Hebrew prophets

¹ Berdyaev, "The End of Our Time," p. 30.

² Quoted in Grisar's "Luther" (Engl. ed.), Vol. IV, p. 210. But the reference to Werke (Erl. ed.), I², p. 14, Hauspostille, does not appear to be correct.

³ Werke (Erl. ed.), 36, p. 411. Conclusion of "Auslegung uber etliche Kapitel des fünften Buches Mosis."

protested against much that went on in Jerusalem. Its ethos was negation, its outcome a Christianity stripped to the bone, and now in some danger of perishing from lack of flesh and clothing.

This is, of course, the simplest answer to a question over which Macaulay,¹ in his matter-of-fact, unmystical way, pondered to no great purpose—the question why Protestantism so quickly lost expansive power. But the explanation deserves to be reinforced by looking once more at what Luther was throwing away—at the subtle attack that he was making upon liberty in its innermost fastness. The supposed liberator of Europe from the tyranny of Pope and Curia must from this standpoint be reckoned the enslaver of all mankind who hear him. “Dr. Martin” becomes, on his own evidence, the groom who bridles the human will like a saddle-horse and holds it harnessed and steady for God or the Devil to mount.² Freedom in his system is gone. Man is moved only by Fate, sometimes cruel, sometimes kind, sometimes Godwards, sometimes towards Hell; but in what a God who predestines man to destruction differs from a devil it is best left to those who profess to be able to assimilate these extraordinary ideas to say. Luther’s doctrine of predestination proved in the end too much even for Melancthon to stomach, and has doubtless turned many sick who have attempted to digest it. But we have to reckon with it here because Luther liked it so well that he describes it, doubtless from a polemical standpoint correctly, as his best article of all and the sum of his teaching,³ and, to make assurance on this point sure, condemns the world for its seduction by the flattering doctrine of free-will, device of the devil as he holds it to be.⁴

¹ In the essay on Ranke’s “History of the Popes.”

² “Sic humana voluntas in medio posita est, ceu jumentum. Si insederit Deus, vult et vadit quo vult Deus. . . . Si insederit Satan vult et vadit quo vult Satan. Nec est in ejus arbitrio ad utrum sessorem currere aut eum quaerere, sed ipsi sessores certant ob ipsum obtinendum et possidendum” (“De Servo Arbitrio,” Werke (Weim. ed.), 18, p. 635).

³ “Assertio,” Werke (Weim. ed.), 7, p. 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

"No one," in a word, according to him, "has the power even to think anything evil or good, but everything takes place agreeably with necessity."¹

Conversations between dogmatic persons are always amusing to imagine; and it seems a pity that Landor did not try his hand at a conversation between Luther and Johnson instead of between Johnson and Tooke. But we can guess, at least so far as Johnson is concerned, pretty much what would have passed; and the reader, who has now for some while been plunged in sixteenth-century hot-gossiping and has by no means reached the end of his immersion, will not perhaps complain if for a moment a douche of eighteenth-century cold water from the Johnsonian spring is substituted.

"Dr. Mayo. 'Pray, Sir, have you read Edwards of New England on Grace?'

Johnson. 'No, Sir.'

Boswell. 'It puzzled me so much as to the freedom of the human will by stating, with wonderful acute ingenuity, our being actuated by a series of motives which we cannot resist, that the only relief I had was to forget it. . . . The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity.'

Johnson. 'You are surer that you are free than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection from prescience. . . . If I am well acquainted with a man I can judge with great probability how he will act in any case without his being restrained

¹ So the passage stood in the "Assertio" in Luther's lifetime (Werke (Weim. ed.), 7, p. 146), but it was modified after his death.

by my judging. God may have this probability increased to certainty.'

Boswell. 'When it is increased to certainty, freedom ceases, because that cannot be certainly fore-known which is not certain at the time; but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any contingency dependent upon the exercise of will or anything else.'

Johnson. 'All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it.' "¹

So, maybe, the matter stands even now for many thoughtful minds, or at least with this rider added from subsequent Johnsoniana.

"'But, Sir, as to the doctrine of Necessity, no man believes it. If a man should give me arguments that I do not see, though I could not answer them, should I believe that I do not see?' "²

The world of Dr. Martin Luther was no more the world of Dr. Samuel Johnson than it was the world of St. Paul or St. Augustine. The Reformer was, in fact, no better content to leave the problem to common sense than he was to see it resolved by Catholic theology, which envisages any right-doing on man's part as "an act organically one, effected equally by God's grace and by man's free co-operation."³ Human nature, after a thousand circumlocutions, not to say contradictions, emerges from his hands as pitiful, as helpless, as servile a thing as can well be imagined. No less, in fact, when his doctrine attains its full development, is required of man than to glory in the gross injustice of God who, like the most arbitrary of tyrants, imputes sin to one and not to another,

¹ *Boswell* (Hill's ed.), III, p. 290.

³ *Grisar*, "Luther," II, p. 226.

² *Ibid.*, IV, p. 329.

having predestined both before birth to shame or glory, as the case may be. No kind of freedom—religious or political—can be reasonably expected to prosper on a soil thus frost-bound with necessity. The freedom that Luther immediately threatened was, as we have seen, the liberty of the sons of God, but the sweetness and light of Humanism were likewise in great danger, if, with the advance of this northern winter, the wind should get permanently set in the Lutheran quarter. It was the more fortunate, then, that, since no Athanasius was at hand, at least an Erasmus was there.

For Christendom, as we have seen, was fast becoming a beleaguered city, menaced at both its gates—at the privy postern of individual responsibility, not less than at the grand entrance of corporate unity. To lose the one was to lose control of the old pilgrims' way to heaven; to lose the other, of the great Roman road of Catholic civilisation. Here was cause enough to fire the dullest imagination. It was not, however, in the character of the first Humanist in Europe to rush hurriedly into a fray. Erasmus disliked the prospect of controversy only less than the prospect of martyrdom; and he resisted for a time the expressed desire both of Pope Clement and King Henry that he should enter the battle. As the breach between Rome and Germany widened, however, his importance grew; and the wish to make him declare himself became an increasing object of solicitude to those engaged in a world-shaking struggle. His influence upon men's minds was undoubtedly exceptional. His scholarship, assailed though it had been since his New Testament appeared in 1516 by a multitude of critics who fastened upon real or imaginary slips like wasps upon honey; his style, so well calculated at once to satirise and persuade; his wide and independent judgment, which had spared, least of all men, the clergy; his known desire for reform—these things combined to fix all eyes upon him and make some ears attentive to what he might have to say. He was, how-

ever, too dispassionate a man to make up his mind quickly and too prudent a man to take sides in haste. He saw that Luther, however roughly and rudely, was fighting abuses; and with all that made for reform as distinct from revolution he was in honest sympathy. On the other hand, he had far too good an understanding both of politics and theology to suppose that anything was to be gained by creating divisions. "Christ I know," he writes in 1520, "Luther I know not. The Roman Church I know, which in my opinion does not differ from the Catholic. From it death will not tear me away unless it be clearly torn away from Christ." So uncompromising was he, though no man had been at more pains to contrast the worldliness and vice of certain ecclesiastics with the purity and simplicity of the primitive Christians! "Be doubly sure of this," he goes on, "if any movement is in progress hostile to the Christian religion or dangerous to the public peace or adverse to the supremacy of the Holy See, it does not proceed from Erasmus. . . . Many great persons have entreated me to support Luther. I have answered always that I will support him when he is on the Catholic side. They have asked me to draw up a rule of faith. I reply that I know of none save the creed of the Catholic Church, and I have advised them to be reconciled with the Pope and to stop complaining." Thus in sentiments which Froude characterises as "entirely honest," does Erasmus define his attitude. But, if we would know all his mind upon the subject, we shall have to seek it in the brief epitome that he himself gives of his conversations: "You will find," he tells the same correspondent, "that I have said nothing except that Luther ought to be answered and not crushed."¹

In these dispositions, then, Erasmus watched Catholic and Protestant prepare themselves for battle, and in these

¹ Ep. to Louis Marlianus, Bishop of Tuy in Galicia, March 25th, 1520 (Allen, "Opus Epist. Des. Eras.", IV, p. 459).

dispositions likewise avoided the reading of Luther's books, lest he should be forced into giving the answer himself. For northerner and reformer though he was, his mind instinctively took in judgment the fine edge of light that marks the finished humanist. For all its casual excesses he had eyes to see the incomparable power and beauty of the Florentine Renaissance, which was even still tinting with lovely hues all the air of Italy; and he declared with rapture that Lethe or its like would be needed to wipe out his radiant memories of Rome,¹ itself at this time, as Gregorovius observes, "a Tuscan city."² One who had known so well how to take folly in his stride must, even so, have known something of an artist's agony as he saw the great debate between the German soul and the *anima cortese* of Latin civilisation grow to a mighty quarrel, the one side intent upon substituting a narrower for a wider culture, the other allowing the fairest perspectives to be spoilt by ugly features in the foreground.

For to a conflict between Italy and Germany—the Italy of the Renaissance and the Germany of Luther does this conflict come, at least during its first lustrum between 1517 and 1522, when it is still more or less possible to distinguish the leading issue from that great mass of prejudice, pettiness, cruelty and misunderstanding which later envelops all in fog. Some there are who, above the raised voices of the colloquy at Augsburg in the fall of 1518, when Luther spoke as man to man with the Cardinal Legate—the polished, scholarly Caietan—will even fancy that they catch the distant echo of German tribesmen pursuing Varus's doomed legions or hear the premonitory murmur of the guns that, just four centuries after Luther's break with Rome, came so near to crushing Latin civilisation, conceived as a body of

¹ To the Cardinal of Nantes, Op. Ep. 136, Feb. 8th, 1512.

² "Rome in the Middle Age" (Eng. tr.), Vol. VIII, Pt. 1, p. 242.

universal law and custom. But there are others, like Gregorovius, who have told us that as Luther threw the Bull *Exsurge, Domine*, forbidding him to preach, into the bonfire at Wittenberg, the German people "consecrated themselves to war against all tyranny of conscience" and "were called to assume the spiritual leadership of the world";¹ who have attributed to "the German intellect" "the discovery that without ceasing to be deeply religious and a Christian, a man might dispense with the vast and formal apparatus for salvation";² and who have asserted with full assurance that it was "the restlessly progressive spirit of the Reformation, ever renewing all the vital forces of the nation, that after the growth of three centuries brought the political reformation of Germany to completion in a national empire, the political idea and power of which are greater and more moral than the colossal world-wide empire of Charles V." *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. It is enough to say here that at the Augsburg colloquy and in the persons of its protagonists, Luther and Caietan, two profoundly different criticisms of life met and clashed, that on the one side stood the German genius clasping the sacred scriptures which her perverse, industrious children were in due course to tear to pieces, verse by verse and chapter by chapter, until poetry and truth alike were gone, and on the other side Rome, the Sacred Host as ever in her hands, but with her vesture gorgeous, her head bejewelled with the new learning of the Renaissance, her feet shod, if not with the silver shoes of allegory, at least with the purple slippers of the Sacred College, and upon her face that finished mask of urbanity which is capable of blinding even the keenest eyes to the age-long piety behind.

All the strange blend of ruthless vitality, racial pride, acquisitive ambition, ingenuous sentiment and hysterical suspicion

¹ "Rome in the Middle Age" (Engl. tr.), Vol. VIII, Pt. 1, p. 270.

² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

that in our own time has made Germany so dangerous and difficult to deal with ranged itself behind Luther as, in the four decisive years between 1517 and 1522, he reached the parting of his ways. Songs of innocence harmonised with hymns of hate to celebrate his praises and give timing to his steps. Simple peasants, soon to be sadly disillusioned, saw in his gospel the golden age returning, whilst knights, errant or rampant, like Ulrich von Hutten or Franz von Sickingen who detested Rome and all things Roman, seized the occasion to fish for spoil in the troubled waters. Thus when in 1521 Luther came to Worms and stood excommunicate but still inviolate before Emperor and Diet, the veil of the Holy Roman Empire was plainly rending.

Rending but not yet rent! For as the year closed there occurred one of those events which, if History were written from a less confidently secular standpoint, might be reckoned a special providence calculated to display, as it certainly did, the particular weaknesses of both parties to the coming struggle. At the instance of Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Caietan but under some impulse that they could not afterwards satisfactorily account for, the Sacred College, when all agreement upon obvious candidates had failed, elected with one single dissentient Adrian Dedel, an austere old Dutchman, to the Papal throne. The former tutor of Charles V—for that office had been perhaps his best recommendation both to a cardinal's hat and the papal tiara—possessed precisely the virtues that had seemed wanting to the Popes and the temperament that was to be wanting to the Reformers. He was austere, uncorrupt, holy; he was also quiet, patient, and deliberate. Not only had Luther been given such a Pope as he demanded and the Curia such an example as it required, but the Emperor had received a valuable associate, if, that is, Pitt was right in asserting that of statesmanlike qualities patience ranks as the first. Needless to say, men being what they are and the Curia

what it was, this virtue and wisdom were largely wasted. The Cardinals, instead of falling into line with the Pope's reforming policy, lived pretty much as they had lived before; whilst Pasquin's supposititious statue registered the views of Rome on the subject of the ill-starred Adrian VI in glittering pasquinades. And in Germany, Luther, instead of rushing to the aid of just such a head of the Church as he had been demanding, continued to belch out abuse as if he were dealing with the devil.

The European situation was tragic, but it was also not a little absurd. Even the "Cambridge Modern History" is moved to merriment, and notes with gentle puckishness that at this point in time the leadership of Christendom had passed to a pair of "German professors." A carping criticism might perhaps complain. But, if Deutsch be rendered Dutch and if a Dutchman be no more than a German salted by Atlantic breezes and sobered to Batavian grace, there was good reason why Martin Luther should have found in Adrian Dedel a soul compatriot with his own. That he made no effort to help a true reformer set in the very seat whence reform ought to have come, that in fact the brave old Pope, whose hands would have been vastly strengthened by the addition of German aid and the closing of the northern schism, should have been left to battle with Italian laxity alone, is the measure of Luther's political intelligence, if not of Luther's religious honesty. In the first twelve-month of the new pontificate the psychological hour for a reconciliation passed. Luther emerged from the Wartburg more separatist than before; the Pope, after a conciliatory move, grew more minatory; and throughout Germany the breach widened and the States began to range themselves on the one side or the other. By the autumn of 1523, when there ended a papal reign, as deeply stamped with miserable results as honourable intentions, one-half of Germany was

ready to break away from Rome and all Rome was passionate for another Italian Pope.

Cardinal Giulio de' Medici was elected to the Holy See and took the name Clement VII. Ranke recalls Vettori's view that so good a man had not occupied the papal throne for a century, moderate as he was in food, sparing in dress, devout, religious; neither proud nor venal, neither miserly nor licentious; and with it all a man of affairs and of wide culture and experience. But the decisive battle in the struggle had been lost before he came into power; and he passed for a bad general, which for all his good qualities he may have been. One success, however, he had in contradistinction to his predecessors. He persuaded Erasmus to take the field.

In the diatribe or discourse upon the freedom of the will ("De libero arbitrio diatribe") which consequently appeared, the author seized, as Luther declared, upon the real matter at issue, upon the cardinal point (*cardo nostrae disputationis*);¹ and, since the two principals to the dispute are here agreed, we need not hesitate to agree with them. Erasmus was, in fact, fighting, as we have already seen, for the justice of God and the dignity of man against dogmas which would have so effectually destroyed the righteousness of the one and the conscience of the other as to make moral responsibility appear no better than fraud and social order depend upon nothing stronger than force. Luther, however, liked his strange doctrine of the servile will too well to be moved by any logic on the part of Erasmus. In a reply following closely upon his notorious exhortation to "hew down, stab and slay" the unfortunate peasants who, to all appearance excited by his denunciations of constituted authority, but, if his metaphysics were right, instigated directly by God or the Devil, had risen against their rulers, he upheld with dogmatic fervour, as has already been seen, the absence of

¹ "De Servo Arbitrio," Werke (Weim. ed.), 7, p. 131.

human freedom, the powerlessness of the human will, and, in a word, the unconscionable tyranny of God.¹ A Lutheran apologist pleads indeed that neither by Luther nor Erasmus is the power of the will considered in itself, but only in its religious aspect.² Such odd conceits are apt to stultify the causes which they seek to serve. Erasmus at any rate suffered from no illusion that any subtleties of this kind would be appreciated by the world at large; nor did they suffice to reconcile the mind of Melancthon, than whom none perhaps knew Luther better, to the doctrine of the servile will. All, in truth, who have ever truly served under the flag of the Humanities, or taken Nature, however fallen, for a noble thing, or conscience for a heavenly messenger, or human beings for the sons of God, must in the end recoil from doctrine so disastrous. For God cannot long seem such as Luther makes him without the human spirit rising to wrest back the captaincy of the human soul, resolved at least that, if man must go to hell through no fault of his own, it shall not be as the slave of such a master.

In this manner, then, grew up the great paradox of the time—the paradox present in the fact that men began fighting for the cause of the servile will with loud cries of liberty. The theory underlying indulgences, sacraments, works and merits, whatever view we take of it, was part and parcel of a theology that envisaged men as workers together with God, and God as the fountain of grace and regeneration; and that one-third of Europe should have preferred the Lutheran doctrine of the servile will, with its grim Calvinistic appendix, must still appear astonishing, even though it is patient both of local and financial explanation—even though

¹ "Absurdum enim manet, ratione iudice, ut Deus ille justus et bonus exigit a libero arbitrio impossibilia . . . sed fides et spiritus aliter iudicant, qui Deum bonum credunt, etiamsi omnes homines perderet" ("De Servo Arbitrio," Werke (Weim. ed.), 18, p. 707).

² Mackinnon, "Luther and the Reformation," III, p. 242.

LUTHER

. . . in religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?¹

Wherever reason is preferred to passion as the guide of life and free-will to necessity as the philosophy of experience, there can hardly be two opinions as to whether Erasmus or Luther was right. For a moment, indeed, the two had stood at no so great distance from one another—for that brief moment, in fact, which as we saw, Berdyaev has noted, when Luther seemed to be defending, more truly perhaps than he really was, the ancient liberty of conscience and criticism implicit in Christianity itself and explicit in such a statement as St. Bernard's that "faith should be persuaded and not imposed."² But the spirit of liberty can never long inhabit the same house as the spirit of revolution; and the conclusion of the whole matter is to be read in the famous "*cujus regio, ejus religio*" arrangement by virtue of which all Germans were required to conform to the religion of their civil rulers. Here was patent a servility of the will indeed; here was latent such a "*trahison des clercs*" as must equally offend the true adherent of a republic of letters or of a kingdom of God. For Erasmus, then, with his own faith in a society sustained by reason and united upon the basis of the Apostolic See, participation in the conflict which had been joined became, sooner or later, inevitable. Yet the first publicist in Europe came, as we have seen, late into the field, so late indeed that Duke George of Saxony told him he had taken two years too long to harness himself for battle. Certainly his arms, when he got to work, proved little more effective in opposing the German sea of troubles than Mrs. Partington's time-honoured mop in repressing the incoming ocean.

Ours, however, is an island story; and we need not hence-

¹ "Merchant of Venice," III, 2.

² "Fides suadenda est, non imponenda."

LUTHER

forward concern ourselves overmuch with the impact upon our shores of the circumjacent waters. Yet to a poet's eye the formation in Germany of that vast mass of heterogeneous hopes and hatreds, doctrines and protests which we call the Reformation might well appear to have some such place in More's biography as the iceberg in Thomas Hardy's poem on the loss of the *Titanic*. Who in the year 1520 would have guessed that the spiritual crisis and anti-papal polemics of an Augustinian Friar at Wittenberg could have menaced the life of a brilliant young lawyer, just then rising into eminence in London? Yet so it was, and, throughout the term of years which we have now to traverse, the career of the one continued to bear down upon that of the other until at length the two converged and clashed.

Alien they seemed to be,
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,
Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event.¹

¹ Hardy, "The Convergence of the Twain."

DUSTY ANSWER

"I MUST confess," observes Sir Anthony Absolute to Mrs. Malaprop at their first encounter as they reasoned together about Miss Languish's poses, "that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question." And some such retort might well have been returned to Dr. Martin Luther, so muddled did his mind appear, so clearly did he demonstrate the advantages, if not of the scholastic philosophy, at least of clear-cut thought and of some modicum of humility and authoritative guidance. He cut, in truth, if their writings are any index, as absurd a figure in the eyes of King Henry and Sir Thomas More as ever Mrs. Malaprop cut in the eyes of Sir Anthony; but they lacked unhappily the grand manner of the eighteenth century to help them out of their difficulties and were constantly betrayed into the mistake of saying plainly what a fool they thought him. He was no doubt profoundly provoking. How provoking one has only to turn to the prologue of Henry's "Defence," where he appears as wolf and snake and a limb of the devil to boot, or to the epilogue, where he is classified as a hellish wolf, compared to the old serpent in Eden and set down as no better than a madman, in order to discover. All such vituperation we may, no doubt, if we choose, regard as no more than Bluff Harry's pretty way, for we have his own word for it that, before he wrote, he had put on the armour of charity—whether in whole or only in part he does not tell us—and in his milder moments he is content to speak of "the little monk," much, no doubt, as if one should say

nowadays the little whipper-snapper. But, however that may be, the English King made it clear enough that he saw his German antagonist as no better than an ill-conditioned loon, and that he meant his subjects to do likewise.

Luther, if he had been a cleverer or a wiser man, would at once have seized all the advantages of moderation. Few more crushing defeats can be inflicted in controversy than by a social inferior who has the restraint to meet bad manners with better. But Luther's manners fell under the same reproach as Mrs. Malaprop's conversation, and, like her, he remained innocently content to illustrate the force of the opposition case. Just as that excellent lady industriously fortified in every sentence that she uttered Sir Anthony's argument about female education, so did Luther supply with unremitting zeal the proof of Henry's allegation that, whatever else the Reformer had or had not, no one could suppose him possessed of the grace of charity. The Apostle of Reformation in point of fact railed and ranted and wrangled for all the world like a Billingsgate fishwife. Henry he declared was calamitous, as stupid as could be, a lunatic, a trifler, a great rogue, a sacrilegious fellow, a robber, an ass, a pig, a half-wit, an anti-christ, a portent of folly, a King of lies, damnable filth, dung from the privy, a mad and most intractable monster with a papistical body, a light-minded buffoon, a most insipid Thomist, a trick Thomistical, a pig of a schoolman.¹

"Kakophuism" indeed, affording perhaps some little excuse for the "Euphuism" of the next generation, and meanwhile proving Henry's contention that this German wolf was hard to handle! "In what manner," the King had asked, is he to be dealt with who, if you teach him, trifles with you; if you warn him, grows angry; if you exhort him, strives with you; if you try to placate him, flares up; if you contend with him, goes mad?"² And in despair or disgust the monarch

¹ I owe this fine collection to Fr. Bridgett's footnote on pp. 211-212 of More's Biography.

² Assertio, "De Sacr. Extr.-Unc."

left it to his minister to make a reply. Thus was More dragged into the great debate.

Controversy is unavoidable in a world like ours. The deepest truths can neither be asserted nor defended without exciting surprise and causing annoyance and nothing is more impressive, and incidentally convincing as regards the authenticity of the narrative, than the manner in which controversy finds its way into the most mystical and sublime of the Gospels. Yet those who love More best must most regret that it was as the King's advocate that he first appears in the case for the Church against the Reformation. A quarrel already inflamed with abuse, and not one's own quarrel either, tests a man's discretion to the utmost; and More so little satisfies the test that it is hard to see why Prof. Chambers needed to look further than the "*Responsio ad Lutherum*" if he wished to dissipate "the atmosphere of blamelessness" about his subject of which he complains as a supreme difficulty.¹ It is true, indeed, that More never put his name to that publication, but called himself *Guiglielmus Rosseus*—William Ross—and left it to others to unveil his identity. His responsibility, therefore, is as little or as great as that of an honest lawyer who speaks to his client's brief or a conscientious journalist who writes to his editor's order. He believed, no doubt, what he said, but he might have said it differently, or more agreeably, or not at all, if he had had himself alone to please. The envoi, or peroration, as he calls it, of the book is in fact eloquent of his searchings of heart—as well as of all the difficulty and distress of the time. Converted with reasonable freedom of translation from Latin into English idiom, the passage might perhaps be rendered somewhat thus:—

"I am in no fear, gentle Reader, that your equity will not readily condone your finding so often in this book things from which I think your modesty will recoil. Nothing more

¹ "*Thomas More*," p. 140.

distressing could have happened to me than to have been coerced by necessity into saying anything that might offend pure ears with impure words. But there was neither escape nor evasion unless I had decided not to attack the very thing I was vehemently at war with—the scurrilous book of Luther. Besides, if a man on the look-out for calumnies was to be answered at all, it was improper to omit anything that he had written and unlawful to alter his words when there was nothing behind them; nor can that be honestly paraphrased that is dishonestly propounded. And finally how can one who takes upon himself to refute the scurrilous deceits of the man, reply in pure and clean terms to the most impure language of an impure rascal? For he debates in a manner to make it plain that he has in mind a certain most absurd kind of immortality and has already begun to enjoy it. He lives, moves and has his being in the feeling and excitement of some little glory of this kind, presuming that, after some myriads of ages, men may remember and speak of a certain rascal there had once been, named Luther, who, when he had beaten even evil spirits in impiety in order that he might adorn his school with worthy emblems, surpassed magpies in garrulity, panders in depravity, prostitutes in obscenity, and all buffoons in buffoonery. . . . I ask you, Reader, what sort of heretics were ever so ludicrous as this kind? Renewing as to some extent it does in itself all those heresies that Christendom once condemned, suppressed and extinguished, this torch of hell relights their cinders afresh. . . . If you turn the matter over in memory you will see, Reader, that whatever was held most sacred by the old doctors of the Church, most Christian as they were from their very cradles, is by these Lutherans held in contempt. What was celebrated of old with so much veneration as the most holy sacrifice of the Mass? What but that which by these swine is so fouled and trampled on and almost abolished? . . .

Are they not making a road by which even the one sacred thing they have left they may shortly eliminate? Of what price are the prayers they make who not only have done away with the Hours but even with those supplications that the Church has everywhere chanted in aid of the dead? The inhumanity of which thing who does not abominate? For if (as they falsely maintain) it were ever so doubtful whether the prayers of the living are profitable to the dead, nevertheless what is there invidious in showing pious sentiments, and making trial of prayers as to which, if you are in doubt, perhaps, of the value, you are in no doubt of the harmlessness?

“What was formerly held more religious than fasting? What was more exactly observed than Lent? Now these latter-day saints, lest they should seem to fast daily, dedicate every day to orgies. Who is unaware in what esteem continence was formerly held, how sternly enjoined was conjugal fidelity, how well approved by the ancients was the chastity of widows, how constantly and carefully virginity was commended? And these are all things which have Christ himself for their author. Now, that Antichrist undermines all chastity almost utterly. Priests, monks, virgins, dedicated to God, under the devil’s auspices call themselves spouses and with a train of devils celebrate nefarious nuptials in a church of malignants. The pact and promise which, when given to men, only bad men violate, they do not fear to violate, when given to God, freed from care as they are, with Luther countenancing their unions—Luther, who even begins to countenance several wives at the same time (which in one case he justifies as digamy). . . . To this then at length has Lutheran piety grown. By that single impiety, under the influence of which they wish to appear and maintain that they are creatures of necessity, as if the sure deliberate will of God drove man into any crime you please, are all their crimes defended. . . . Do you doubt, do you doubt, O illustrious Germany! that,

as they sow spiritual things of such a kind, they will at some time or other reap carnal things of a like kind? Already, so I hear, thistles are spreading badly and God begins to show in what manner He judges that sect when He allows priests who marry to be united with no other than strumpets. . . . Moreover here and there upon such bridegrooms, first disgraced by the wretchedness of ill-fame, then rendered desperate by disease, want and poverty, and a little later slipping into roguery, He inflicts at last a public punishment. And would that vengeance may go no further than amongst such dregs of society; for, unless it is quickly obviated, it will wander on some way still. For, just as the most part of the princes look not unkindly on the revolting clergy, doubtless sighing for the possessions of those who are in defection and hoping to take them as if abandoned, and rejoice that obedience is being withdrawn from the Roman Pontiff as long as they conceive a hope of disposing of, dividing and dispersing all things among themselves, so there is no reason to doubt that the people look forward in their turn to throwing off the yoke of their rulers and despoiling them of their goods. And when they have done it, and are drunk with the blood of princes, and luxuriating in the gore of nobles, and no longer patient even of a popular magistracy, they will turn their hands at length upon themselves and, their laws despised, themselves anarchical, lawless, unrestrained, unreasoning as the result of Luther's teaching, slay each other like the illustrious earth-born brothers. I pray Christ I may be a false prophet and, if men recover their senses and obviate these new-fangled evils, I may prove so. . . .

"I return to the book of Luther, which, since it is such as you see—a mere farrago of scurrilous words—makes my excuse, Reader, wherever you think mine not terse enough, infected as it is with the filth of the other. But if I seem sometimes long-winded, your equity must take into consideration that,

since the words of that man had to be quoted and those of the Prince subjoined, and something of my own thrown in in order that Luther's chicanery might be made clear, it could not but happen that the work should grow a little, the more that I have all this while been silent and that, in conformity with the custom of all courts, he who has to answer is allowed more time. But, if you think you find less weighty and relevant matter than the size of the pamphlet warrants, you cannot rightly lay even that at my door, for I did not go beyond the contents of Luther's book or bring in from outside other subjects than were there. Nevertheless I hope to goodness I have thrown in certain things which may so undermine the foundations of Luther that at the same time it may be necessary to pull down the man's stupid superstructure of impious teaching. At any rate I am sure of this, that nothing out of the King's book has been ridiculed by Luther in which I have not clearly convicted Luther of impudent deceit. Finally, whilst I do not claim for my treatise that it should be read by the world in general, so neither do I admit it to be such as anyone who thinks Luther's trifles worth reading has a right to ignore. For, if anyone despises Luther's siren songs,¹ there is no need—nor do I desire it—that he should waste his time over this book. Indeed for nothing do I pray more than that I may sometime or other see the day when all mortal men will cast away both these trifles of mine and all his mad heresies; so that, the interest in the worst things being overpowered, the incitements to strife buried, and the memory of contentions obliterated, the serene light of faith may illuminate our minds, and sincere piety and true Christian concord return. And this concord I pray He may sometime give back and restore to earth Who came to earth to give it us from heaven."

So More wrote; and something of the pain and passion

¹ Nenias.

of the period lingers in his sentences. We can see how deeply his feelings were outraged by two things in particular—the broken oath of the professed religious, vowed as they had been to celibacy, and the denial or neglect of prayers for the dead, which at a later date he deals with more fully in his “Supplication of Souls” in answer to Simon Fish. For his own pledged word was sacred to him, and also that noble partnership between the living and the dead in which, years later, Burke was to find one of the underlying conditions of a true society.¹

Despite the unfailing domestic good-temper to which Roper witnesses, More was not yet proof against the provoking of men. As when some years before Germain de Brie had abused England after a sea-fight, cutting words rose to his lips—cutting words which may have been reinforced by a broad hint from the King that, whilst Royalty could not waste its time in contending with so base an adversary, it would not stand in the way of one who should have a fancy to do so.² Henry had, in fact, applied to his own case the shrewd advice of the wisest of kings neither to answer a fool according to his folly for fear of comparisons nor to let him go unanswered lest he should become wise in his own conceit.³ The rascal was not to escape the rod, but neither was he to have the honour of further castigation from the royal hand. For pre-eminently as a rascal⁴ does Luther figure in the pages of the “Responsio,” as, in fact, a most outrageous compound of all rascality—an impudent liar, a finished trifler, a reverend ass, a progenitor of noodles, a fool or, at least, for fear he might take that too much to heart, as almost but not quite a fool.

Thus and thus, then, did More delineate the features of his adversary; and there will be few perhaps to-day who do not find

¹ Burke, “Reflections” (ed. Nimmo), III, p. 359.

² See the supposed letter from Joan. Carcellius to Guil. Rosseus at the beginning of the “Responsio.”

³ Proverbs xxvi. 4, 5.

⁴ “Nebulo.”

themselves less in sympathy with Bridgett's qualified defence than with Brewer's distressed condemnation. The former would have us remember how Ajax boxed the ears of one Thersites, a "whoreson cur," and gave him no more than he merited.¹ But the other has recorded his pain and surprise at the sight of "a nature so pure and gentle, so adverse to coarse abuse," and, as he adds, so pre-eminently at the time representative of Humanity in its lovely reactions to "sun and shadow," soiling itself with "vulgar and offensive raillery." Tried by the sternest code and in the highest court of justice, Brewer's verdict must stand, if only because strong words, though doubtless sometimes and in this case needed, need also to be purged of the least taint of facetiousness and ridicule. More mocks even as he smites; and his blows lose moral force in consequence. Of him, as of some greater saints who in their first zeal would have had truth prevail by other means than love, it might have been said that as yet he "knew not what spirit he was of." He knew only that Luther was violating all those canons of judgment and proportion that mark off a "Greek" from a "Philistine"; and we can, if it is some consolation to us, see the outraged Humanist in all he says.

That, however, is not quite the whole explanation of More's "Answer." If its author was too careless of taste, the critic should not on that account be too oblivious of circumstance. All said and done, the "Responsio," if we look closely at it, is the work of a lawyer speaking to a brief where replication and rejoinder have already defined the broad lines of argument without too much consideration for the shaded subtlety of truth. More, whilst, as throughout his life, scrupulously careful to give his opponent's views in his opponent's words, approaches the subject, not as a judge concerned to see that each party to the quarrel should have his side equitably stated, but as an advocate who has satisfied himself,

¹ Bridgett, "Sir Thomas More," p. 210.

not only that the plaintiff's pleadings are vitiated by a thousand inconsistencies and contradictions, but also that the plaintiff is himself no better than a scoundrel. In these dispositions he does what lawyers do still, and seeks to prejudice the worth of adverse testimony by discrediting the character of the deponent who gives it. The "Responsio" is nothing if not forensic, a cross examination, in fact, such as may still be heard to-day in the Courts when a truculent and woolly-headed witness has fallen a victim to an astute and able lawyer. The colloquy is consequently directed less towards showing what is true than to showing who cannot be trusted. For More was certainly at no pains to conceal from the jury of his countrymen what a dirty dog he thought this German boor who had already set all Western Europe snarling and was soon to drive all Germany into something worse than a dog-fight. We, too, have had our differences, not with the old Germany of the medieval mystics or the eighteenth-century *Aufklärung*, but with a Germany, Luther-reared and Prussian ridden. And about the latter we in our time have said our say—not always, perhaps, in parliamentary diction. Let him, then, that is without sin among us cast the first stone here at one who in the very beginning of troubles raised his voice in protest.

The historian cannot, in truth, exaggerate the irritation that More felt at the turn that things were taking. All the reformer in him rose in revolt against all the demagogue in Luther. "Come, come, rascal," he cries, after showing how often Luther has shifted his ground in regard to the mixing of water and wine in the Chalice, "proceed, you knave, to confuse counsel. In such wise is a silly soul befogged; so do the impious darken knowledge; thus are schismatics deluded; thus do heretics revolve in vertigo."

This *saeva indignatio*—rude,¹ if we will, and objectionable—

¹ So Bridgett, p. 209. "That it [the "Responsio"] is a pleasant book

reaches its climax, tragically if also understandably enough, in the chapters that bear upon the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Luther had complained of Henry's polluting the words of Christ and ignoring adverse arguments, whereas the King had enumerated the words of Christ in full from all the Evangelists and in More's view put the arguments of Luther better than Luther himself. And the scholar then fastens upon the words of the Eucharistic Institution as devastating proof of the limitations of Luther's Latinity. Violence, Luther had urged, must not be done to the sacred text nor, unless the context clearly compelled, the words be received in other than their grammatical sense. Bread in Christ's phrase must accordingly be reckoned bread, and not its accidents, and wine wine, and not the appearance of it. But here, as More points out, Luther takes leave of grammar. 'This' (hoc) of the neuter gender cannot stand as pronoun in place of bread (hic panis) which is masculine. "'Hoc,' that is 'hic panis,' He says, this which He had received and broken, is My body. But this is the interpretation of Luther, not the words of Christ nor the sense of them. If He had handed on the bread which He received to His disciples in the same manner as He received it, and had not first changed it into flesh and in tendering it said 'Take and eat,' He would rightly be said to have proffered what He had taken into His hands; for it would have been nothing else that He was tendering. But since, before He gave it to the Apostles to be eaten, He changed bread into flesh, they did not receive the bread which He had taken up, but His body into which He had changed the bread. . . . Now as to what Luther prates about, or rather plays the fool with, in the interest of simplicity of faith, when Christ says of the wine, not 'Hoc est sanguis meus,' but 'Hic est sanguis meus,' I marvel what has

to read I do not contend, nor that it is free from language that is rude and nasty."

come to the man's mind when he wrote it. For who does not see that it tells nothing at all in his favour, rather the contrary? It would have seemed to tell more on his side if Christ had said, 'Hoc est sanguis meus.' For Luther would have had at least a handle to argue that the pronoun related to the wine. But now, with wine of the neuter gender, Christ says not 'Hoc' but 'Hic' is My blood and, with bread of the masculine gender, He says too, not 'Hic' but 'Hoc.' As the pronoun shows in each case, Christ is administering neither bread nor wine, but His own very Body and Blood."¹

Here lay the true core of controversy; here stood the very keep of the castle. The Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, conceived as, with growing clarity of vision and fullness of definition, men had conceived it for fifteen centuries, was, to put Henry's book alone in evidence, both the final aim in the Lutheran challenge and the all-governing consideration in the Catholic defence. But any thrust at the heart involved the penetration of protective armour, any attack upon the citadel the capture of an outlying bastion. The Papacy was as a coat of mail to be pierced or a bulwark to be carried before the greatest of the Sacraments could be reduced from the high mystical estate which the language and circumstance of its institution had warranted and the Vulgate preserved, to the prosaic plane of the new theology; and here Luther relied upon the resources of a vocabulary all too well supplied with vituperative epithets. More, as he surveyed this particular aspect of the Reformer's activities, supposed that he perceived the same proof of knavish tricks and impudent mendacity² that had struck him so forcibly elsewhere. "Who," he cries in this connection, "who unless he had known of Luther's malice, would not wonder here also at his inconstancy? For formerly he denied that the Papacy

¹ Bk. II, c. 12.

² "Nebulonem improbe impudenterque mendacem."

was of divine right, but conceded that it was of human right. But now, losing confidence in his own statement, he asserts that it is neither the one nor the other, but that the Pope arrogated it to himself by force alone and was a usurper and tyrant. He used to feel, therefore, at one time that at least by human consent power had been deputed to the Roman Pontiff over the Catholic Church; and this to the point of detesting the schism of the Bohemians and pronouncing them damnable sinners who would not obey the Pope. Though it was not so long ago that he wrote thus, he, however, now falls into the same errors that he then abominated. . . . What new eyes has he got? Or does he see with keener sight after anger has supervened upon his habitual pride and hatred, and does he perhaps observe the better for making use of such eminent standpoints?" Then, significantly enough, the writer continues, "I will not insult the Pope by discussing his rights with anxiety or solicitude as if they could be held doubtful; it is enough for my present business, that the enemy of them is moved by such rage that he deprives himself of credence and plainly shows himself by reason of malice to be neither consistent nor aware of what he says."¹

More perhaps than any painstaking assurances of the student do such casual sentences, with their serene assumption that, in face of so well-established a prerogative, the traditional claims and historic position of the Papacy stood in no need of defence, show us how unhesitatingly the thought of Rome as the spiritual centre of Christendom was accepted by a great contemporary lawyer who was also of the King's Council. Yet, for all that, the historian needs still no little art if he is to convey to English readers without shocking their susceptibilities, the constitutional position that the Holy See once held in the English Kingdom. It is now a quarter of a century and more since Maitland's book on Canon Law in the Church

¹ Bk. II, c. 4.

of England challenged and discredited the conclusions of Stubbs. Yet still with Englishmen in general, Lyndwood's celebrated treatise with its plain teaching that the Canon Law, and the Pope's decretals, and the Papacy itself lay in the very structure of English ecclesiastical organisation, goes unknown and unheeded. The mere fact that only through Rome, and in the same sense as the dioceses of London and Paris, were the dioceses of England legally connected with one another¹ should, however, bring home to the least skilled in such investigations the legalities of the case. The Pope was part and parcel of the Church—so much so, indeed, that to inquire by what title he exercised authority would have seemed, as More's treatment of the subject illustrates, no more reasonable than to inquire by what right the English Monarchy came to displace the separate units of the Heptarchy. One might quarrel with the Pope, oppose his policy, contest his nominations, reject his bulls, but never, unless one had fallen under Lollard influences, did any one doubt his right to be there. Christendom without the Pope would have seemed in fact as much deprived of meaning to the plain men of that day as, to use the time-honoured illustration, the play of Hamlet would seem to us if it were to lose the services of the Prince of Denmark. The Council of Constance made this clear, if nothing else. It sat, not to revive an ecclesiastical usurpation or mend an international ornament, but to put back in its place the corner-stone of European civilisation and society; nor need we look further than the strong words of a nineteenth-century Dean of St. Paul's to make sure of it. It is the cautious historian of Latin Christianity who observes with reference to the work of the Papacy in the Middle Ages:—

“ . . . It is impossible for man to imagine by what other

¹ See on this Maitland's chapter on “The Universal Ordinary” in “Roman Canon Law in the Church of England.”

organising or consolidating force the commonwealth of the Western nations could have grown up to a discordant indeed and conflicting league, but still a league with that unity and conformity of manners, usages, laws and religion which have made their rivalries, oppugnancies and even their long, ceaseless wars on the whole to issue in the noblest, highest and most intellectual form of civilisation known to men."¹

Such an opinion was in the days of Thomas More the commonplace conviction of ordinary men. For the most part they felt no occasion to inquire into the Pope's credentials, deeming as they did his claims more deeply planted in history and tradition than those of any other government or ruler. One can, however, challenge the right of any human institution to exist and question the right of any prerogative to be exercised. Luther by his attacks had made it a matter of practical politics to ascertain whether the Pope's authority came to him by ecclesiastical appointment or divine right. Upon that point many men, and More amongst them, had still some need to clear their thought, though Lyndwood, than whom no English authority stands higher, had in 1430, after the Council of Constance and on the eve of the Council of Basel, shown in a text-book for students that in his view no General Council could be summoned without the assent of the Apostolic See and had "cited without disapproval the opinion of those doctors who maintained that the Pope was above a General Council."²

For the present, however, we may take leave both of the "Responsio" and the problems that it raises. We shall meet them again in English instead of Latin dress, and with a plaintiff as well as a defendant of English origin. But for the moment the reader has earned a right to some change of scene and atmosphere.

¹ Millman, "History of Latin Christianity," Vol. I. (Libr. ed.), p. 430.

² Maitland, "Roman Canon Law in the Church of England," p. 14.

THE QUEEN'S MATTER

AMONG the portraits in the gallery of Renaissance studies to which the hand of the historical student has given back something of their former charm and colour there is none more remarkable than that of Jean Luis Vives. A Spaniard and a Humanist, this brilliant young man, after opening his mind to the new learning in the schools of Valencia, Paris and Louvain, came, when he was no more than twenty-seven, under the notice of Thomas More. Some writings, casually brought to his notice, had been enough to excite the lively interest of the English Minister in a mind so evidently wide, elegant and informed as that of this wandering scholar, and a further inquiry, addressed to Erasmus, produced an enthusiastically generous and affirmative answer. Vives, so Erasmus wrote, had not only a philosophical intelligence of the first order, but might be expected to achieve a fame beyond his own. And this was no mere idle tribute such as Age will sometimes pay to Youth. A century later Casaubon's friend Andreas Schott could speak of Vives, apparently with general consent, as one of the three supreme scholars of the Renaissance, pre-eminent for the excellence of his judgment, as Budé was for learning and Erasmus himself for literary craftsmanship.

The priceless, though under-valued gift which Vives had received was never more needed than in that world of the Renaissance into which ideas, discoveries and inventions kept pouring in wild confusion; and it was all one with its possession that this Spanish genius was no less alive to the charm of the

old culture than of the new learning, no less sensible of the inexhaustible interest of Nature than of the ripe wisdom of the Humanities, no less a mild evangelist of the inductive method in philosophy than a gentle student of the epistemological foundations upon which man has to raise his laboratory before the human mind can be in any good position to observe the physical world at all. "He ran through in his own person," says a recent appreciative study of his career, "the whole gamut of progress from the orthodox medieval scholar to that of one of the most advanced Renaissance thinkers. . . ." "It was Vives," the same authority continues, "and not Bacon, as is sometimes supposed, who first insisted on the significance of Nature, observation and the necessity of sense training as a basis for intellectual education."¹ Of few men of the time, then, would it seem easier to affirm that he carried a chart ample enough to guide him through the mazes of a period of transition or left landmarks sufficiently large to show where a true evolution of society might have led. For, as the writer just quoted also takes occasion to observe, "the essential characteristic of Vives was not love of scholarship in itself. He cared for his fellow-men, for the elemental pieties of life in the home, the city, the nation, and profoundly believed in the best knowledge ascertainable as the surest way of happiness in the solution of life's practical problems."²

It was in 1522 that this engaging person came to England, at the instance, as it seems clear, of Wolsey, whose acquaintance he had made, perhaps on More's recommendation, at Bruges in the preceding year. Some promise of patronage had presumably been given him by the all-powerful Cardinal. At all events he was soon made free of the hospitalities and amenities of the new College of Corpus Christi, whose

¹ Foster Watson, "Jean Luis Vives," pp. 1, liii.

² *Ibid.*, "Vives," p. lxvii.

Founder—Bishop Fox—had aimed, so he said, at establishing a very beehive of intellectual industry such as might sweeten with the true honey of Hymettus the plain living of Christian men. Some extension of this quaint conceit won for Vives the title of "the mellifluous doctor"; and indeed few names could have better suited one whose preoccupation had lately been the production of a commentary upon Augustine's "City of God"—a commentary subsequently, indeed, stigmatised at Rome as standing in certain respects in need of correction, yet, so far as the subject was concerned, well calculated, for reasons already shown, to attract and capture the interest of Thomas More. The dedication, however, presumably by permission, solicited even more eminent patronage. The King was named; and Henry responded graciously by conferring upon Vives the task of devising a plan for his daughter's education. In this manner, then, "the second Quintilian" made his way to court.

The appointment of one of her own compatriots to be the director of Princess Mary's studies doubtless pleased, and was perhaps prompted by the Queen. For Katharine had already commissioned Vives to construct a kind of map of life for women; and the book, appearing as it did in the year 1523 under the style of "The Institution of a Christian Woman," registers, if it does not initiate, what we are accustomed to call an epoch-making change. Here, according to the foremost authority on the subject,¹ was a treatise significant of a parting of the ways in women's education and of the substitution of modern humanism for the conventual discipline of the Middle Age. Out of a storehouse where speculation and tradition had mingled their gems with happy effect he drew treasures of thought both new and old—treasures not unworthy of a race that could explore mysteries

¹ Foster Watson, "Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women," p. 27.

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as fruitfully in company with St. Theresa or St. John of the Cross as with Cortez or Columbus. Sufficiently religious to affirm that the end of man could be no other than God,¹ sufficiently mystical to recognise that "the end of everything good is covered with a veil because it is reached only as a last point,"² sufficiently humane to see impiety in the attacking and slaughtering of men, and wars as no better than "cases of theft unless perhaps when undertaken against thieves,"³ Vives stood in much need of the support of women; and he turns to them with a confidence born of the age-long veneration paid to one upon whom an œcumenical council has conferred the title of "Mother of God" and poetic vision some of the loveliest epithets that have ever entered into the mind of man—Mystic Rose, Ivory Tower, Star of the Sea. To the eyes of Vives it is above all woman's province to inform, teach and amend the dispositions;⁴ and he seeks to invest her with a full complement of piety and learning. Once again "the valiant woman" of the Book of Proverbs—the "eternal feminine" best qualified to bear that name—is dressed anew to fashion; and once more that shapely figure proves equal to circumstance and change.

Women, indeed, in that dramatic and tumultuous time into which, if we are to catch the full significance of More's far-famed household, we must seek by every manner of means to enter, were everywhere rising to their various occasions, so that even to this day the Renaissance type of woman seems, perhaps, the most vital, "intriguing" and accomplished of her sex and more than any other to deserve the name of mistress, either in its nobler or its baser meaning. The Latins lead this long procession—Beatrice and Laura; Vittoria Colonna and Lucrezia Borgia; Isabella d'Este and Mona

¹ "The Transmission of Knowledge," Bk. I, c. 4.

² *Ibid.*, Bk. I, c. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, Bk. I, c. 4, and Bk. V, c. 1.

⁴ "Of the Institution of a Christian Woman," p. 55.

Lisa; Diane, fair and frigid as the crescent moon, who in her strange motto claimed to have conquered Love, the conqueror of all,¹ and Gabrielle, the fair and the frail. Do these not rise before us as we sit by the fireside—and then, as the flames die down, like a last word of reminiscence, the image of her of whom Ronsard sang “au temps qu'elle était belle?”

Queens have their place and hold their own amidst this crowd of witching women—queens as different as Catherine,² the Medici Queen of France, and Mary who was Queen of so much more than France—of Scots; of England, if the old law of Christian marriage had prevailed, before her son; and of Hearts before her grand-daughter was thought of. Invaluable to historical romance as these two women have proved, their political significance must, however, still be reckoned to have fallen short of that of certain of their compeers in contemporary England. In all the long warfare of the Reformation there is no more momentous engagement than that which was fought actually about the persons of Queen Katharine and Queen Anne; and in all the settlement nothing more decisive than the effect exercised by the aims and dispositions of their respective daughters. The drama of the French Huguenots can be conceived without the figure of the Queen-mother. The triumph of John Knox could have been achieved without any monstrous regimen of women to act as a foil. But to deprive the English Reformation of the four Queens, consort or regnant, who have just been mentioned is to shatter its plot beyond repair.

Great part for us of the interest of Vives lies in the fact that upon a stage where women were so soon to have star-parts to play, his sympathy, not less than his intimate

¹ “Omnium victorem vici.” Her real relation to Henry II seems very doubtful; and Battifol gives reasons in his “Century of the Renaissance” for thinking it other than is usually alleged.

² The account of her in Louis Battifol's “Century of the Renaissance” shows that she had much charm as well as discretion and resolve.

opportunities of observation, throw into clear light all the forgotten fidelity, all the depreciated charm of the Catholic protagonists. Accomplished foreign critic as he was, he proves, so far as such things admit of proof, that no condition was lacking, at least in England, to a full development of the old Catholic culture of women as we see it elaborated, for example, at the close of the Middle Age in the treatise of Christine de Pisan or epitomised in the personality of Margaret of Richmond. Broadening down from precedent to precedent, the gracious tradition might have been expected to absorb without difficulty the sweet waters of the new Humanism. That was not to be; but Vives shows us how it might have been. His book about women—and this is our particular concern with it—blends the memory of the house of Castile with that of the household of Thomas More. After the models in these two families he draws the picture of a perfect woman. "There were no queens by any man's remembrance," he declares with conviction of Isabella of Castile's daughters, "more chaste of body, none better of name, none better loved of their subjects, nor more favoured, nor better loved their husbands; none that more loyally did obey them, nor that kept both them and all theirs better without spot of villany . . . none that did more perfectly fulfil all the points of a good woman,"¹ and then passes on, lest perhaps the privilege of princesses might seem to furnish them with some unfair advantage, to consider the delectable company of those elect ladies who in the very year of his arrival in England took up their residence in More's new house in Chelsea. Here he found the type he had in mind fully realised in flesh and blood. "I would reckon," he wrote, "among this sort, the daughters of S[ir] T[homas] M[ore]—M[argaret], E[lizabeth], C[ecilia], and with them their

¹ Foster Watson's edition of Vives's "Of the Institution of a Christian Woman," p. 53.

kinswoman M[argaret] G[iggs], whom their father, not content only to have them good and very chaste, would also they should be well-learned, supposing that by that means they should be more truly and surely chaste. Wherein neither that great, wise man is deceived, nor none other that are of the same opinion."¹

This feminine ideal, which in all its grave dignity was exemplified in Katharine of Aragon and in all its lively mirth in those daughters of music who made glad the "Great House," as it was called, in Chelsea, was now to be challenged by another cast of feminism so plainly congenial to the revolutionary forces which Luther had set loose, that even the profound student of Henry's State Papers stops in his course to point a moral. Nothing in Brewer's learned volumes is in its way more curious than the remark, dropped as he enters on the story of Anne Boleyn, that "to a woman possessed of any firmness of character and brought up in the rigid severity of the old Faith," the ordeal which the rising "gallantry" of the times imposed upon such a girl as herself "would have proved comparatively harmless."² For Protestantism, as he goes on to observe, drew its strength as much from those who rejected ecclesiastical authority as a barrier to licence as from those who rejected it as a barrier to truth.³ Under the first of these descriptions fell the Boleyns, city people of no great descent, as the world then judged, though hall-marked by intermarriage with the Howards, and of a sort to look to kindly change or timely circumstance to make them greater. The Reformation represented to them and their kind the gates of opportunity; and Anne figured as the portress with the keys. That we can wonder whether without her they would still have got in and away

¹ Foster Watson's edition of Vives's "Of the Institution of a Christian Woman," p. 53.

² Brewer, "Reign of Henry VIII," Vol. II, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*



KATHARINE OF ARAGON AND ANNE BOLEYN

After the Holbein portraits.

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with the spoil, or whether without the spoil Luther's ideas would ever have found acceptance in English minds, is the measure of her place in history. At first sight, at all events, the sequence of events has all the look of a variation upon Pascal's famous theme regarding the shape of Cleopatra's *nosé*. The witchery of Anne—does it not take rank beside the bewitchment of Antony?

For in France, where there was no such Anne and where, according to Napoleon, Francis I might have and ought to have brought in the Reformation, matters went all the other way, though the King, in Brewer's view at least,¹ was not ill-disposed towards the new ideas, and certainly licentious enough to have found them serviceable. Anne de Pisseleu, in other words, proved no substitute for her namesake; and the Papacy was able to conclude with the Crown a concordat which recovered for the Pope full spiritual authority over an episcopate already inclining towards Gallicanism. Against that settlement, as all the world knows, even the most popular of French kings battled in vain; and the kingdom that he could not win in his armour on the battlefield Henry IV gained at length upon his knees at Mass.

The France, however, to which in the year 1514 Anne Boleyn was sent, had not as yet entered into the valley of decision; nor was the Court of France under Louis XII what it presently became under his successor. The child arrived in the suite of the English Princess who, to accommodate her brother's diplomacy, had consented to become the French King's wife. Upon Louis's death, Queen Mary, suiting her own inclinations, married Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; and the girl, probably² at this juncture not yet fifteen, passed into the service first of that "bonne reine Claude," whose

¹ Brewer, "Reign of Henry VIII," Vol. II, p. 175.

² Anne's age is a well-known battle-ground of historians. Friedmann considers she was born in 1502 or 1503.

fame is now preserved in plums, and later of that Queen Margaret of Navarre, as yet no more than Duchesse d'Alençon, whose name, if little more, was once preserved in poems. Thus, when she returned to England, Anne came with French airs superimposed upon English graces, with a mind already a little drawn perhaps towards the Reformation by her last mistress, and with manners, not to say morals, no better than they should be. With her nimble tongue she came, and with her dancing feet; with her swan's neck and her witching eyes; with her songs and her poems, her lute and her harp; and with those long, hanging sleeves that she taught the world to wear so as to help hide a disfigured or, as malice declared, a supernumerary finger. Already a dark lady of men's sonnets, she was as dark a horse or filly as English history had yet stabled.

The English King had perhaps caught sight of Anne amongst his sister's train at Ardres as the various performers moved this way and that in the pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; but it was at her father's house of Hever that he really took her in, with all her charm and wit and supple grace of movement. At his instance, or otherwise, she was appointed a lady-in-waiting to his wife; and it was then that Wyatt the poet saw and celebrated her just as Chateaubriant, a gentleman of France, had done on the other side of the Channel. The world of fashion stretched before her; and it required no great effort on her part, as the event discovered, to bring it to her feet.

The Boleyns were, as was said, still in the making or at most new-made, but the fact that Anne was wholly wanting in the instincts of a grande dame doubtless enabled her so much the better to show herself off as extremely 'chic.' The perennial theme of the 'catchy' young man and the flashy young woman seems to have quickly asserted itself; and in no great time she was engaged to the heir of the Percys.

There is some reason to suppose that she was more or less in love with him; and he was almost certainly in love with her. The older generation had, however, already devoted the futures of these unhappy children to more politic ends than mutual affection. Yet, even so, the young people might perhaps have broken away from convention and lived for a short time happy, if Wolsey, acting on the King's instructions, had not suddenly intervened. With such powers opposed to them, they were left with no better chance than a secret marriage might have given; and for that Percy at all events was not prepared. Summarily despatched by the Cardinal with a flea in his ear, he found himself compelled to marry Lady Mary Talbot; whilst Anne was simultaneously sent off to sulk at Hever. To sulk, but not to sulk forgotten! At Hever the King began to pay his court to her, though at first she received him coldly. To be a King's mistress was no compensation in her view for not being a nobleman's wife. Only perhaps when she saw how much greater was the prize dangling just within or just beyond her grasp—let so much at least be remembered to her credit!—did she entertain the Sovereign's advances.

It was in 1524—we have his own word for it¹—that Henry ceased to live, in the technical sense of that term, with Katharine. And it seems to have been about the same time that he began to bother his confessor, Bishop Longland of Lincoln, with scruples about the validity of his marriage to her. Under the Levitical law to marry a widowed sister-in-law had been pronounced unlawful and for a sanction menaced with childlessness; and, though Henry might have drawn comfort from the particular rule of Deuteronomy² requiring a man to raise up seed to a brother dying childless, and the more that Katharine had borne him children

¹ See Brewer's "Reign of Henry VIII," Vol. II, p. 162, footnote, for the evidence (that of Grynaeus).

² xxv, 5.

and had still a daughter living, he became increasingly disposed to regard his own case as a fulfilment of the doom foreshadowed. In the retrospect, it should perhaps be said in passing, Henry gained the impression that Longland, and not he himself, had originated the doubts that troubled him; and there was even a story about that the Bishop had been egged on to suggest them by the Cardinal. But Longland assured his chaplain, who repeated it to More,¹ of the contrary; and Wolsey cleared himself from his supposed responsibility for Longland's imaginary act by eliciting a denial on the point from Henry himself in open Court. In truth, though diplomatic policy might accommodate itself to and utilise a change of queens, no bishop nor archbishop was likely to be the first to move in such a matter. The purity and simplicity of the marriage law as Christianity understands it are not the easiest things to maintain against the infidelity of men and the loopholes of lawyers; but to cast doubt upon the validity of the greatest marriage in the kingdom, when it had lasted unchallenged for a full decade and when before it took place the objections to it had been both considered and provided against by the highest authority in Christendom, was neither in keeping with Longland's pastoral office nor Wolsey's papal aspirations. Katharine, for the rest, always declared—and she was, not only the sole person with a good title to speak, but also, as it happened, an extremely reliable witness—that she had never been Prince Arthur's wife in more than name, so that the Jewish law upon the subject, whether or not an inalterable law of God, whether or not applicable under the Christian dispensation, could hardly be cited to her disadvantage. All that in fact could really be said with any show of justice against the marriage rested upon secular, and not religious grounds.

¹ See Strickland, "Queens of England: Katharine of Aragon," p. 121, note.

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The succession to the throne, if the King left no male heir, was not without its difficulties. As we see things now—we who have marked how great a lustre can linger about the reigns of queens, and how the Elizabethan and Victorian eras and the Augustan age of Anne all glow with what the world calls glory—Henry had, indeed, no cause for fear. A little more faith in God or, if we please, in destiny, a little more insight into new conditions, a little more regard for keeping troth, a little less looseness in morals, and his elder daughter, unsoured by domestic insults and untroubled by religious rebellions, might have initiated the fortunate line of English queens regnant and have governed as Isabella had lately governed in Castile or Anne of Beaujeu in France. For there was nothing so fundamentally wrong with Mary Tudor as to have caused us to call her bloody. At the time when Vives planned her education, she was a pleasing, intelligent child, who took kindly to the Humanities and should have proved humane. Doubtless she was always wanting in the grace of a great nature. Had it fallen to her mother or her grandmother to fill her place, it is probable enough that neither sweetness nor serenity would have failed them. But, with Mary, a disposition, always without charm, was cruelly spoilt in the forming by her mother's misfortunes; and time and circumstance, working together at the loom of her destiny, wove her life's pattern out of sable thread, then shot it through with ensanguined colour.

Thus, like some uncomely statue, the figure of this most unhappy woman blurs the long vista which More's life and death and writings disclose to view. It was in her reign that his collected English works were printed for the first and last time until this present century; and his memory owes her this much acknowledgment. But it is no less true to say that her reign buried all his causes. It is not only that she lit the candles by the light of which the most part of English-

men have for long centuries read the story of the Reformation, but that she raised so great a pall of smoke that all the meaning of his life was lost in fog. By her misfortunes, mismanagement and mistakes, by her failure above all to master the profound truth, long afterwards enshrined in Joseph de Maistre's observation that "a counter-revolution must not be a contrary revolution but the contrary of a revolution," the point, not merely of More's martyrdom, but of More's politics was missed.

It was during the year preceding Anne's return to England that a discarded mistress of the King's, Elisabeth Blount, was married to Sir Gilbert Talboys. The liaison thus concluded left Henry with a son—a boy pleasing enough and promising enough to cause his father to reflect. Princess Mary, alone of all English princesses, had for a time been given the significant style of Princess of Wales; but in the late spring of the year 1525 things took another turn with the promotion of the royal bastard to be Duke of Richmond, a great title once held, though as an earldom only, by the King's father. More, as he stood reading the patent of the new peer in the Palace of Bridewell before the assembled lords, may well have wondered what would come of it all, and not the less that the misbegotten child was given, with his new dignity, precedence of Princess Mary, provided though she had been with a miniature court at Ludlow and the nominal governance of the Welsh principality. The King, it was clear, was occupied with the problem of the succession, yet not preoccupied. A deeper matter engaged his attention—his growing estrangement from Katharine, his growing feeling for Anne.

Not even Wolsey, familiar as he was with his master's mind, perceived at first that the two thoughts of the unsettled succession and the engaging minx might meet and lend each other mutual aid. Perhaps it never struck him that the upstart House of Boleyn could raise its eyes to royal wedlock. Perhaps

he trusted to the fact that the King's previous liaison with Anne's sister, Mary, had created a barrier of affinity as canonically prohibitive as that alleged between the King and Katharine. Or perhaps too much power had brought too much confidence and, like many successful men before and since, he had begun to trust to his star instead of to his talents. Anyhow, he failed to diagnose the significance of the conjunction in the royal mind of public policy with private feeling and perceived in his master's wish to be quit of the Emperor's aunt no more than a good occasion for a marriage with the French King's sister. Such a change of wives would have fitted in well with a re-orientation in foreign policy from Flanders back towards France.

More watched the changing scene with keener vision, all the more remarkable because appearances at this time were well calculated to deceive. For to this date¹ must presumably be assigned those royal visits to Chelsea upon one of which Roper offers us so vivid and significant a commentary. The King, evidently in high good humour, was in the habit of arriving suddenly at More's house and sometimes staying on for dinner, the better to enjoy himself. And on one occasion Roper saw him do something the like of which he had seen him do only once before, and then with Wolsey. Throwing his arm about More's neck, Henry walked his Minister up and down the garden for the space of an hour. It seemed the very consummation of favour; and Roper could not resist offering some congratulations to his father-in-law. But More already knew the King too well, and perhaps guessing that, with the business of the royal marriage already in the air, these royal attentions were not utterly disinterested or merely affectionate, answered with memorable perspicacity: "I thank our Lord, I find His Grace my very good lord indeed, and I

¹ The references to More's being Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and to the French War still being waged are the determining factors which between them indicate 1525 as the date of Roper's anecdote.

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believe he doth as singularly favour me as any subject within this realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I may tell thee I have no cause to be proud thereof, for, if my head would win him a castle in France, it should not fail to go."

Castles in France, castles also in Spain, and the diplomatic world looking more than ever like a chess-board with a simultaneous check to king and queen, with bishops moving after their manner transversely, and knights dodging about on diplomatic errands and the hand of Princess Mary making a gambit! It was a strange world, and pregnant with novelties, not only in religion, but also in foreign policy. The country was, in fact, preparing to leave its ancient moorings and seek its future on the water, so that the English fleet, which Henry has the credit for originating, might well appear prophetic of adventure and sea-change—of that rising spirit of imperialism which, according to the classic, perhaps too convenient phrase, was to lead Englishmen to conquer the world in "a fit of absence of mind." Towards this coming expansion of England the initial step has, not quite fancifully, been attributed to More. For colonisation is certainly one of the themes of the "Utopia." Forming no part, as was cleverly conjectured by Ernst Tröltzsch,¹ of the first edition of the book, and appearing a little inconsequently in the second, the passage relating to colonies becomes entirely intelligible, if it was added a year later than the rest, in 1516 after the projected voyage to North America of John Rastell, who had married More's sister, had become a matter of interest in the family. This expedition, which was apparently designed to conclude in settlement, ended, to be sure, in smoke, for a mutiny broke out, and a mutiny approved apparently in high Admiralty quarters hostile to the enterprise. Yet, failure as it proved, the adventure sufficed to turn More's searching eye upon the underlying moral and

¹ "Christian Thought," p. 147.

political issues. His sympathy and interest are almost certainly reflected in the passage of the "Utopia" where the inhabitants, for all their hatred of war, are described as waging it to obtain possession of unoccupied soil, the implication being that no people has a right to withhold land from development. Here lay, no doubt, a germ of imperialism, but of an imperialism without egotism and without excess. For the sense of stewardship penetrates all More's thinking; and those who have no present use for their territories or possessions have, in his view, no solid claim to keep them. He is here in line with or even ahead of the best Catholic thought of his time. Before he died Francisco de Vitoria was to publish a dissertation on the ethics of the Spanish colonisation of America, and thus to lay the foundation of international law as developed by Grotius and to secure to the Spanish school of jurists the credit of those humane ideas which the modern League of Nations, too shy of first principles in politics, has shown itself so lamentably incapable of handling in practice. To the eye of the Spanish Dominican, who had passed from the Sorbonne of France in Paris to the Sorbonne of Spain¹ at Salamanca, the Spaniards had no title to enter the Indies except the right common to all men everywhere to travel and to trade with their neighbours. The Pope, in Vitoria's view, could give the Spaniards no claim to seize the possessions of non-professing Christians, nor did the Spaniards enjoy any right to conquer other countries, since only wars of defence were tolerable. For justification they must look no further than the moral duty which the educated and the intelligent are under to give their services to weaker peoples as to weaker brethren, and, if in discharging it they were so unfortunate as to come into conflict, they were, he held, entitled to fight only so long as the benefit of the natives was kept in view.

¹ I borrow the expression from J. B. Scott's "Francisco de Vitoria and his Law of Nations," p. 72—to which book I am greatly indebted for the whole of this passage.

We can all see—indeed we all know—to what abuse even the most generous doctrine may be turned. Yet still it is there, explicit in Vitoria's pages; and it is a profoundly interesting, if highly-speculative question what might not have happened if More and Vitoria, who were almost exact contemporaries, and who were both to some extent in their Sovereigns' counsels, had had the handling of the colonial problem of the world at its inception. For Wolsey's foreign policy was insensibly laying the foundation of another type of imperialism altogether than the Humanists had in mind—the type which flourished under Elizabeth and gave us our splendid buccaneers and our sea-stories and our long war with Spain. But the older tradition of foreign policy, had it been adhered to, should have produced something very different—something as different as a steady alliance is different from a swinging balance—and it was this tradition which Mary Tudor represented. As became one who was a daughter both of England and of Aragon, her natural orientation was towards Flanders and Spain, and, but for the issues raised by the Reformation, her sympathies might have seemed fortunately timed. The long convergence of English and Spanish fortunes first dimly discernible in the careers of the Black Prince and John of Gaunt had, through the marriages of Mary of Burgundy with the Emperor Maximilian, of the Archduke Philip with Joanna, and of Henry VIII with Katharine of Aragon, been so appreciably, if variously, advanced that it might seem to have reached a point of junction during the reign of Philip and Mary. In any case so great an event as the marriage of the rulers of England and Spain within sixty years of the discovery of America can hardly leave the most *terre-à-terre* of historians imaginatively indifferent. For here, conjoined in sovereignty, were the two countries, whose national genius was respectively to dominate the colonisation of the two Continents of the Western Hemisphere. They met, however,

as it proved only to part; and their parting was in strife and bitterness, signed and sealed by the assault and defeat of the Spanish Armada. Yet, if the constant mutual attraction of interests, manifested later in the supreme European crises of the Spanish Succession and Peninsular Wars, be any indication, England and Spain were made to be friends and, had they been able at this time to work as partners in the parturition of things to come, the long, devastating wars of religion and commerce which disgrace three centuries might have been fought with less peril to mankind or never fought at all. In collaboration the two countries might conceivably have repeated across the Atlantic something like the miracle achieved by Latin civilisation in Europe. Each had something to contribute to the common cause of colonial development—the Spaniards perhaps some tincture of that supernatural grace which has made the Spanish mystics famous, the English doubtless the gifts of Martha rather than of Mary. It is not without significance that Mr. Fisher, in his recent masterly review of European history, should, after passing judgment on the crimes of the Europeans in America, qualify his condemnation by observing that “there was a long intermediate period during which the Roman Church honourably endeavoured to improve the lot of the labouring population in the Spanish colonies,” whereas “for the British Colonies the Church of England made no comparable effort”; that, “while the Spanish Church pressed forward on its missionary enterprise, the British planters looked with active disfavour on the attempt to spread among the blacks the disturbing ferment of Christian belief,” “Chartham supported the (slave) trade as a pillar of national strength,” and “to sailors like Nelson it was an essential prop of the mercantile marine.”¹

Working as they did, however, alone or in opposition, the two great pioneer nations of Europe showed to the

¹ H. A. L. Fisher, “History of Europe,” Vol. III, pp. 1029, 1030.

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vast, teeming Continents that for better or worse had passed under their tutelage nothing of their once common front of faith and little enough of that common front of culture which had renewed its strength in the souls of More and Vives. Yet there was no obvious reason at this time except religious difference for Englishman and Spaniard to draw apart or engage in uncivilised rivalry, nor any plain incompatibility of character or disposition. Their tastes were similar, their temperaments complementary. Alike at this date they drew towards adventure, exploration and empire, though their occidentations were not such that their ambitions were doomed to collide. It even appears that it was from eyeing the beasts of burden, with their loads of gold and silver, which followed in Philip's wake that the English first began to take colonial enterprise seriously to heart. And, as we know, there came to a young man of the name of Eden,¹ a clerk in Philip's so-called "English Treasury," as he stood watching the King of Spain's entry into London one day in the summer of the year 1554, the idea of a great collaborative opportunity between the kingdoms of England and Spain in the development of the newly discovered world. A dream, no doubt; yet still a dream vivid enough to merit remembrance as we look back over the relation of the English and Spanish peoples at this decisive meeting and needless parting of their ways! And who will refuse himself the luxury of a tear if he should chance to reflect what companionable antiquaries Don Quixote and Mr. Pickwick would have made, and how fast a friend of Sam's Sancho must have become—at least if they are right who think that every Spaniard is a gentleman and that the Englishman always knows a gentleman when he sees one? Which things, however, are not established!

Be that, then, as it may, we have still in More's time to reckon with a certain promise of affinity between the destinies

¹ Richard Eden, the author of "Decades of the New World" (1555).

of England and Spain—an affinity that has something to say to the fall of Wolsey, something to show in the loyalty of the English people to their faded Spanish Queen—a woman “more beloved” in these Islands, as it appeared to the Venetian Ambassador, “than any queen that ever reigned” before¹—and something wherewith to charm the memory in the loves of More and Vives. If in the event this flower of good feeling was early cut by the winter of religious discontent, we cannot afford historically to ignore its existence because it does not fit in with the plan of British policy that subsequently became traditional. It is no other than Froude who, in surveying the foreign policy of Mary Tudor, observes that “from a modern point of view the wisest policy was that recommended by Paget.”² And Paget, shrewd old counsellor that he was, stood alone in the Council as the advocate of the Spanish match, not because of any religious leanings—for he had been the friend of Somerset and the adherent of Jane Grey—but because he conceived it to be best calculated to satisfy English interests in a world where the Queen of Scots bade fair to be Queen also of France. “You,” he observed to the French Ambassador, “by your Dauphin’s marriage forced us to be friends with the Scots; we, by our Queen’s marriage, will force you to be friends with the Emperor.”³ No statecraft, perhaps, can hope to do better than bring about such amities between ancient foes; and none, perhaps, comes nearer to combining the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.⁴

¹ “Ven. Cal.,” Nov. 10th, 1531.

² “History of England” (Library edition), Vol. VI, p. 131.

³ Quoted by Froude, “History of England,” c. XXXI (Library edition), Vol. IV, p. 131.

⁴ I may, perhaps, in this connection be allowed to recall the answer I received when, a good many years ago, I was given the opportunity of discussing the international policy of Pius X with Cardinal Merry del Val, and asked rather crudely what principles underlay it. With an exclamation of surprise which I do not precisely recall, he said simply: “We had the New Testament.”

Of the aims and dispositions the latter end of which is to be read in Paget's words of a generation later, we may find, then, the first beginnings in the foreign and colonial outlook of Thomas More. It was, of course, only an outlook. The diplomatist of those days had no more power than the diplomatist of these to give effect to his own views against the will of the foreign minister. Yet no one can become familiar with More's mind and not see that More had no part nor lot with Wolsey. Of what has here been styled ultra-montane diplomacy to distinguish it from that Catholic diplomacy which is dictated by New Testament ethic and has been pursued by the best of the Popes, there have been few more trenchant satirists than he. No passage in the "Utopia" has a keener tooth than that dealing with "Leagues"; and no reader can be in any doubt what Leagues are intended. The League of Cambrai, with which Pope Julius II associated himself against Venice and the Holy League which the same warlike personage engineered against France have left a bad name in history, though in truth the Pope might plausibly have argued that in the one case he was merely recovering his property from a robber, and in the other expelling an alien from his native land. The passage, however, is worth quoting apart from the justice or injustice of its application, for it suggests, if—the words being given to Hythloday—it does not quite prove, a considered preference in More for a policy of political isolation tempered, as men proved able to bear the burden of Christian unity, by the influences of common faith. "As touching leagues," so we read, "which in other places between country and country be so oft concluded, broken and renewed, they [the Utopians] never make none with any nation. For to what purpose serve leagues? say they. As though nature had not set sufficient love between man and man. And whoso regardeth not nature, think you, that he will pass for¹ words? They be brought into this opinion

¹ i.e. bother about.

chiefly because in those parts of the world, leagues between princes be wont to be kept and observed very slenderly. For here in Europe, and especially in these parts where the faith and religion of Christ reigneth, the majesty of leagues is everywhere esteemed holy and inviolable, partly through the justice and goodness of princes, and partly at the reverence and motion of the head Bishops."¹

The moral sarcasm was keen, the political realism unconcealed. "Whoso regardeth not nature, think you that he will pass for words?" Only the other day the dictum figured as the last word in wisdom when the mechanically-conceived League at Geneva came to a standstill. The criticism, however, might not have been so caustic, had not the policy of shifting alliances been profoundly distasteful to More's mind. Everything in reality combined to make him from the first a supporter of the old English connection with Flanders or, which was the same thing, with Spain. His knowledge of history, his regard for experience, his probity of character, not less than his entry into diplomacy on the commercial side as an intermediary between the English and Hanse merchants, his profound sympathy with Katharine, and his close friendship with such Imperialists as Erasmus, Giles and Vives, all told in this same direction. But, even had these reasons been wanting, a letter of 1520 in which he dwells on the warm welcome accorded by high and low to the Emperor² would leave little doubt about his sentiments. With all his wide philosophic outlook upon human affairs, he was old English at the core—no papist in Wolsey's sense, nor particular friend to the French, though, as not every biographer notices, he was, according to the custom of the time and in common with many of his colleagues, in receipt of a "pension" from France,³ but a firm believer in the proved

¹ "Utopia," Bk. II.

² "Letters and Papers," Vol. III, No. 838 (May 26th, 1520).

³ Friedmann, "Anne Boleyn," Vol. I, p. 99. [The authority is Paris, Bibl. Nat. MSS. Français, Vol. 2997, fol. 54, "Pensions payées en Angle-

value of good relations with the ruler of the Netherlands, whether that ruler held his principal court at Brussels, at Vienna, or at Madrid.

It was not, however, in foreign policy alone that a difference of temperament and opinion divided More from the Cardinal, as an entertaining little incident in the year 1523 was to discover to the world. On Wolsey's recommendation, More had been made Speaker of the House of Commons. None of his predecessors in that office had perhaps taken its language very seriously. In his mouth, however, the traditional request that Members of Parliament might be pardoned if inadvertently they should offend against the royal prerogative became a plea for full freedom of speech in debate on the ground that such liberty is the condition of good counsel. Recognised in principle, these representations were, however, less gladly seen at work in practice. The King was anxious to impose a tax of four shillings in the pound; and this amount, though nothing accounted of by Parliament in the days of Democracy, appeared in those monarchical times no better than extortion. A deputation went to the Cardinal; but the Cardinal would hear nothing of taking less than had been resolved upon. To overawe all opposition he even decided to descend upon the House, leaving to its members only the option of deciding whether he was to come in full state or not. More had consequently to advise with what retinue Wolsey should appear; and we are almost certainly right in suspecting a smile between the lines of his solemn recommendation that the Cardinal be received "with all his pomp . . . with his maces, his pillars, his poleaxes, his crosses, his hat, and Great Seal too," for so, he argued mischievously, if there was any more such indiscreet talk as there had lately been of what was passing within

terre." I have not been able to verify the statement personally, but Friedmann is a careful historian.]

Parliament, it would be easy to accuse some of this prodigious suite of chattering. The great man arrived accordingly in all his brittle glory, and attempted to browbeat now this member, now that of the House of Commons. But they answered him never a word, leaving it all to their Speaker, who, falling upon his knees, remarked that no one of them was equal to the task of replying to so eminent a personage as the Cardinal, even if the customs of the House had permitted it, and that, as for himself, he would need to have the united intellects of all its members to attempt anything of the kind. Upon this Wolsey rose and left in dudgeon. He can have been none the better pleased that it was the King's Under-Treasurer who in the capacity of Speaker had thus defeated him; and he did not conceal his vexation. "Would to God you had been at Rome, Master More, when I made you Speaker," he told his fellow-councillor as they walked together later in Wolsey's Palace at Whitehall. "So would I too, my Lord," More answered blandly, and went on to say how much more to his taste was the newly built gallery in which they were walking than the earlier one which the Cardinal had made at Hampton Court. There was nothing further to be said, or at all events Wolsey found nothing further to say. But he was man enough to show no resentment. For More, after all, had in his own merry way got the desired taxation carried; and the Cardinal advised the King that no one better deserved the customary additional gift of £100 over and above the £100 ordinarily attaching to the discharge of the Speaker's office.

TYNDALE AND THE "DIALOGUE"

IT was in the summer of 1524 that one Tyndale, a clergyman, arrived at Wittenberg to visit Luther. Of this representative man's early life we know less than we should like, but nevertheless something. There is reason to suppose that he came of a Northumbrian family which for better security during the wild warfare of the Roses took the surname of Hichens and refuge in Wales. At all events, with that surname attaching to him the boy who was to leave his mark upon history as William Tyndale was born of yeoman stock somewhere in the Severn valley in the early nineties of the fifteenth century. His education was of the best to be obtained in this country at that time, for he took a degree at Oxford, but likewise studied at Cambridge, where perhaps the presence of Erasmus between the years 1511 and 1515 offered a superior attraction. Then in due course he secured a post as tutor to the children of Sir John Walsh at Old Sodbury Manor in Gloucestershire and, as that patron's nominee, became the parson of Little Sodbury. His conduct is said to have been exemplary and his character stood high, though he was, it seems, a little given to contention. We shall, maybe, get no false idea of him if we picture him as a sixteenth-century Dr. Coulton, as kind at heart, as confident in opinion, and as frequently involved in acrid controversy. At about the age of thirty he was fired by one of the noblest of ambitions. Stirred perhaps by the scholarship of Erasmus, he desired to give the Scriptures a wider circulation in the vulgar tongue, and began to seek for such a change of circumstance as might



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From an engraving by J. Houbrallen after Holbein

assist him in his work. The Bishop of London, however, to whom he applied for a chaplaincy, gave him no help, and ultimately, financed by a friend, he made off to Wittenberg, where he achieved some part of his purpose by translating the New Testament into English under Luther's eye.

Tyndale's enterprise was no new one. Wycliffe had already, as every schoolboy learns,¹ produced a Bible, but, as not every schoolboy is taught, not Wycliffe alone. "The whole Bible was long before his days by virtuous and well-learned men translated into the English tongue." So More declared, and backed his statement up by saying that he had himself seen "bibles fair and old written in English, which have been known and seen by the bishop of the diocese and left in laymen's hands and women's too . . . good and catholic folk that used it with devotion and tenderness."² This evidence is of too much controversial importance not to have provoked disputants who have no disposition to see Wycliffe plucked of his plumes; and, if anyone inclines to believe that the bibles which More saw were merely amended versions of Wycliffe's translation, they cannot be compelled to adopt the more probable opinion that churchmen relied upon their own scholarship rather than upon that of Lollardy. It is anyhow clear from the unexceptionable witness of Cranmer³ that in England custom of great antiquity could be alleged for the reading of Scripture in the vulgar tongue, and that Wycliffe's scheme, whatever exactly it amounted to, was no pioneer enterprise. The capacity of English to convey the subtleties of truth was, however, still doubted; and it was feared that to

¹ Though not perhaps correctly! "It has been a common belief," observes Gairdner, "that Wycliffe was the first to translate the Bible into English and also that it was the whole Bible that he himself translated. Both these ideas must be considered questionable, the latter extremely so" ("Lollardy and the Reformation," I, p. 102).

² "Dialogue," III, 14, 15.

³ "Remains," Vol. II, p. 105.

popularise the Scripture might be to vulgarise if not to distort its sense. The Council of Oxford in 1407 laid down that translations, in order to be lawfully circulated, required the imprimatur, as we should call it, of the diocesan or the province. The decree was reasonable enough. The Scriptures were regarded as being of such consequence to the welfare of the community as to make the correct rendering of their contents a matter of the greatest importance; and in an age which set the welfare of the soul in no very dissimilar place to that now occupied in our modern social economy by the welfare of the body this was to be expected. Just as to those interested in the physical health of the nation the supply of uncontaminated food or the restriction of dangerous drugs seems a proper subject of state regulation, so to these guardians of the nation's soul an insistence that the milk of the Word should be delivered pure and the wine of Life drunk only when properly matured seemed of the first importance. The Church, besides, had long enjoyed a sort of copyright in the Scriptures by virtue of the fact that to her selective authority they owed, not indeed their inspiration, but their recognition and esteem; and it was in the circumstances hardly to be supposed that she would not regard with a jealous eye any attempt, however well-intended, to "pirate," as we might say, her property. Not that she can fairly be accused of hiding her treasures! Before ever Erasmus had hurried out his Greek Testament or Luther and Tyndale their vernacular versions, Cardinal Ximenes, with the patience and thoroughness of the best scholarship, had organised the production of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, containing both the text of the Septuagint and the New Testament in the original, a work of which a high modern authority has observed that "no praise is too high for its design" and that "as regards the execution, it is doubtful whether the best scholarship of all Europe had it been mustered at Alcalá for the work, could have produced a much better result."¹ For either

¹ M. R. James in "Camb. Mod. Hist.," I, p. 603.

scholarly or popular enterprise this furnished a strong foundation; and Churchmen may deserve rather to be praised than blamed for building so cautiously.

The Book that Tyndale's efforts were soon to make the talk of every tavern and the topic of every town was, at all events in his time, peculiarly impatient of anything but humane study. The seemingly heterogeneous collection of books composing the Old and New Testaments yield the manifold secret of their integrity no more easily than other works of genius. No piecemeal inspection or bold eclecticism will ever correctly appraise the consummate artistry of the Scripture canon. Read, as the author of the "Imitation" wisely recommends that it should be read, in the spirit in which it was written, every Scripture enters so naturally into relation with the rest as to produce a coherent—and, as many humane minds have felt, the only coherent synopsis of that pageant of human life in which a living historian, skilled far beyond the ordinary in marshalling its procession, has lately acknowledged himself unable to find either poetry or plan.¹ Precept by precept, chronicle by chronicle, doom by doom, prophecy by prophecy, the destiny of one nation—and that nation seemingly the most capable of climbing the topmost mountains of vision or sinking into the lowest abysses of moral and material degradation—is worked out, to its appointed end, until the clouds and darkness, visible from the first as the veil of a God of righteousness and judgment, part at length to disclose Incarnate Love suffering indeed, yet so mysteriously enthroned as to draw all men's eyes towards Him. The gloom, doubtless, gathers again. The mists that once encompassed Eden

¹ "Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave . . . only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen."—H. A. L. Fisher, "A History of Europe," Preface.

hang even now as thick over the fields of Armageddon; and man may well suppose himself to be approaching the climax of his fate. Yet, if History has any sense or meaning, somewhere beyond the cloud-capped horizon must be located that world half-realised in which the poet's fancy has continually dwelt, where the philosopher has walked in meditation, whence the spiritualist has called out his familiars, and whither the statesman has raised his tired eyes. In the map of life which the Jews have left us this land of promise is surveyed, both in wide panorama and close detail, with a genius not unworthy of a people who have provided the classic examples of the seer and the spy.

The single eye of vision that the Book discovers plays in fact like a searchlight upon eternal hills. From the meek Lawgiver, looking his last from Pisgah, the torch is passed in turn to the Scribe marking from palace-chamber or temple-court the workings of moral causation; to the metaphysical Poet revolving in dialogue and rhythm the problem of pain; to the Psalmist making a music, now grave, now gay, as the tears and smiles of mortal things demand; to the Prophets as they paint immortal scenes of sin and joy and sorrow. It falls with dry light upon the counsels and aphorisms of the Philosopher-king; raises as in letters of gold the shrewd words of the Preacher whilst, from a knowledge born of worldly experience, he reasons of vanity and judgment; causes the wisdom of the son of Sirach to glow with lambent light; and casts a sublimer radiance around the predictions of Isaiah, the son of Amos, walking the streets and lanes of the sacred city; then, with a last effulgence, illuminates the faces of Malachias and Maccabæus as they seal up the scroll of Hebrew story. Searching Jerusalem and all Judea with candles, it reveals the beauty, both simple and subtle, that was once in women's eyes. Resting now upon Ruth as she gleanes in the cornfields, now upon Susanna as she emerges unscathed from

the dark suspicion, then upon Esther, pleading the cause of her people, and upon Judith, as with a fierce patriotism she treads the path which Jael has already trod and where Charlotte Corday will follow, it seems to pause longest as its rays encompass the lovely Bride of the Canticles turning from her royal lover and all his riches to the divine shepherd in whom her soul delights and dissolving the old dream of the hero-king in the growing vision of the Incarnate God.

A view of humanity so catholic, so far-reaching as this has, it may be, always demanded of its student a full measure of Humanism—of that serene and sympathetic understanding which in England at least we have learnt to identify with the companionship of sweetness and light. Mere literalism, at all events, whether coloured by illiteracy or rationalism, as it falls short of the mystical element in, so also falls short of the wide wisdom of a Book where poetry is so plainly indicated as part and parcel of truth. For a mind closed to imagination and unaware of mystery can never hope to perceive things as they really are; and the Bible would in fact be a much less satisfying and convincing treatise upon human life and human conditions than it appears to some of us, if it were restricted to the philosophy either of Horatio or Horace. The word that was to be, as Luther so well appreciated, a lantern to one's feet must also, as the Humanists saw, diffuse such light as never was on land or sea.

The Protestant Reformers had very little idea of all this. Mysticism with its cautious closing of the lips¹ was, perhaps, the last thing in the world to appeal to them. They were, to a degree that has rarely if ever been excelled in this country, responsive to the charm of words; and their vernacular versions, like Luther's Bible in Germany, bear witness to their responsiveness. Household words! comfortable words!—these indeed they provided with a facility and in a perfection that

¹ To shut (the eyes or lips).

the world still wonders at. Yet words also in their broad result so alien to the life and faith of fifteen centuries that the very stones cried out and were silenced by the Puritans. Within a few decades the altar was deprived of the sacrifice, the Church of the altar, the niche of the image, the priest of his office, and what remained of truth had no great look of beauty.

Tyndale had no fear of or care for these perils. He was striving to bring the best book in the world within reach of the humblest intelligence; and it was not in his philosophy to understand that the Jewish Scriptures might be used to manufacture Philistines or private interpretation produce such a crop of sectaries as to invite the Frenchman's description of England as the country of a hundred religions and a single sauce. By the year 1525 his New Testament was ready and copies were streaming into England, some destined to spread good tidings and others to add to contemporary discontents. For in his translation Tyndale had not confined himself to the transcription of evangelical counsels; and his choice of words was calculated to call into question much that had seemed hitherto beyond dispute in institutional religion. Priests were stripped of their sacerdotal character and made into "seniors"; churches subsided into "congregations"; penance lapsed into "repentance"; and the sacramental teaching of the Fourth Gospel was robbed of its mystical meaning. These things, and not, as we shall see, these things alone, vexed More's humaner mind, much as the deficiencies of Peter Bell vexed the soul of Wordsworth; and amidst all the coming dust of controversy their enduring consequences have to be kept quietly in view. As it is with Nature, so it is with the Supernatural. The Bible, so dully read as to give rise to the theory of verbal inspiration, is as a primrose seen yet not perceived. But let that be. It is enough if we recognise that to have every man his own interpreter in

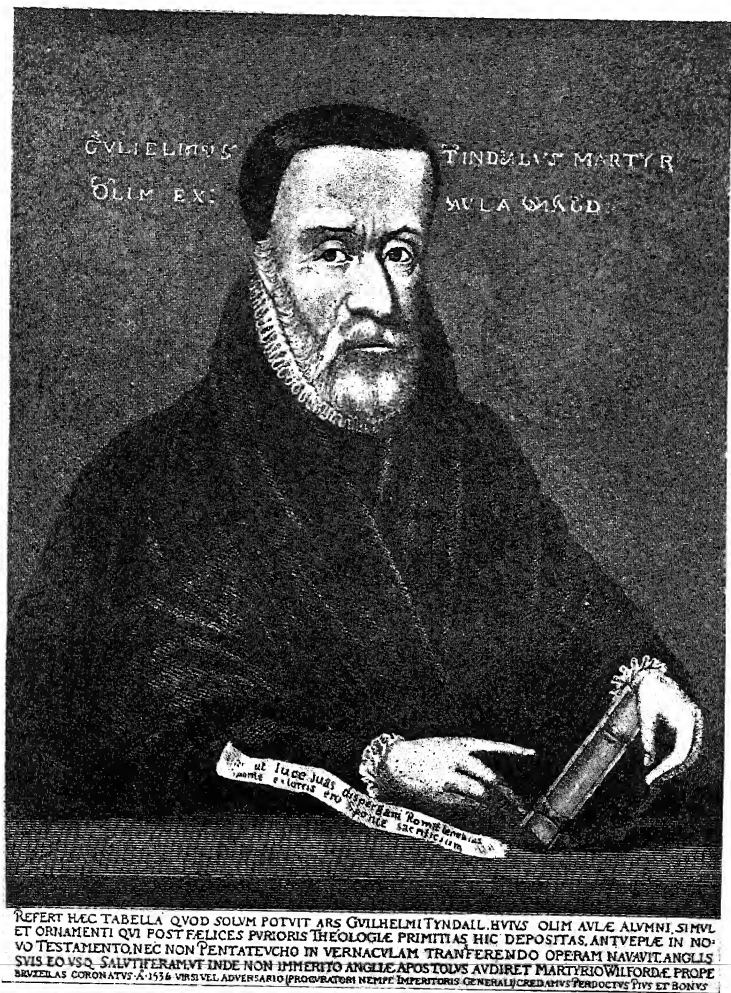
the world of theology may prove as inconvenient as to have every man his own lawyer in the world of justice. As for that fair world of the Humanist where life, according to Goethe's still unwritten prescription, is lived like a poem, the vernacular versions of Scripture with tragic irony were to split it from end to end.

Even in the elect household of Sir Thomas More, where all had once seemed to be of one mind and one mouth, the impact of the new ideas was felt. William Roper, when Margaret More married him, was what we should call a black Protestant.¹ Possessed of Luther's Bible and confident that Luther's writings were the last word in wisdom, the opinionated and argumentative young man was, it is clear, a pretty severe trial to his father-in-law. Eventually his combative talk got him into trouble and he was hailed before the Cardinal. Wolsey let him off with a friendly warning. But neither the warnings of the reigning Lord Chancellor nor the arguments of the next had more effect upon him than is customary where one generation attempts to interfere with the views of another. He liked his father-in-law so little that he is even said to have "abhorred" him; and More reported a rare failure in persuasion to his doubtless anxious daughter in words that should satisfy us of the invariable sweetness of his nature, since here the happiness of the child whom of all his people he loved best and the repression of heresy, which of all things he hated most, were alike involved. "I have borne a long time with thy husband," he told Margaret Roper. "I have reasoned and argued with him and still given him my poor fatherly counsel, but I perceive none of all this can call him home again. And therefore, Meg, I will no longer dispute with him, nor yet will I give him over, but I will another way to work and get me to God and pray for him."

¹ See the Ro. Ba. account (Wordsworth's "Eccles. Biog.," p. 119).

Roper's case was, of course, common enough in the epidemic then spreading through the chief centres of intellectual life. At Cambridge, where Robert Barnes, an Augustinian Friar, preached against the traditional observance of Christmas and the White Horse Inn took from its distinctive clients the name of "Germany," and at Oxford, where one Garrard, a priest, was busy proselytising the students of the Cardinal's new College, and, of course, also in London, the fever of change ran high. More watched it working with grave apprehension; and when Roper, cured of his passing sickness and clothed anew in Catholic conviction, spoke to him of the happy state of the English kingdom—of its orthodox sovereign, its virtuous, learned clergy, its grave and stable nobility, its loving, obedient people—he replied in some brooding melancholy words that have grown famous for the fullness of their foresight. For, whilst assenting to Roper's broad commendation of the several estates of the realm, he added this further: "Yet, son Roper, I pray God that some of us, as high as we sit upon the mountains treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not [to] the day that we gladly would wish to be at league and composition with them and to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly to ourselves."

It was then in some such dispositions that More accepted from his old friend, Tunstall, now Bishop of London and as such prominently concerned at the growth of Reformed opinion, a commission to answer Tyndale's attacks together with full facilities for the study of the Protestant case. For Tunstall, fine flower of the Renaissance as he was and master both of Greek and Hebrew, was not the man to rest content with such negative measures as were taken in the case of Hunne. He was aware—to borrow the words of a recent Anglican occupant of his see—that "the best way to combat



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error was to set forth truth" and, in the crisis of thought that had come upon England with the publication of Tyndale's New Testament and Tyndale's "Wicked Mammon," he looked for the best man to submit the case of the Church to the intelligence of the country. He had to his hand and numbered among his friends one who to a graceful Athenian scholarship and a wide knowledge of the Fathers added a lawyer's training, a statesman's experience, a saint's devotion and a writer's style, one who at this very time stood, in the ripe maturity of gifts and graces, within a step of the high seat of Equity. And, if a proved integrity of spirit, a progressive enrichment and enlargement of mind, a constant, considered bringing into subjection of a body, as Erasmus notes, symmetrically perfect,¹ have anything at all to say to a just vision of mortal things, then More was as well qualified as any man for the last four centuries to estimate them truly. So plainly so, in fact, that Macaulay,² too sure of his own profundity, will presently seize upon the conduct of such a man as this in dying for old mystical beliefs instead of accepting new Protestant improvements as conclusive proof of the ineradicable character of human credulity!

The book that was born of More's response to Tunstall's wishes—the "Dialogue concerning Heresies"—thus gives us the case of the English Church at the great Reformation assize. The author enters upon his subject, however, quietly enough. For, like Plato, and those that with Plato see the larger half of human circumstance as hidden in mountain mist, his preference is for some pilgrims' path, where two may walk at ease and find perhaps the golden thread of the Aristotelian mean to guide their footsteps.

A prefatory letter from a friend to a friend introduces More's companion in the "Dialogue." He is styled the

¹ Letter to Ulrich von Hutten.

² In the essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes."

Messenger, but is, in fact, a devil's advocate, though as cunningly disguised as ever was his client to look like an angel of light. So much so, indeed, that in the new fashion of the Reformers he professes to have no light but Holy Writ and dismisses logic as no better than babble, music as an exercise for the fingers, arithmetic and geometry as the province of tradesmen and masons, astronomy as useless, and philosophy as vain. His learning, apart from Scripture, appears in fact to lie all in the Latin tongue, but suffices with his good wits to get the current objections to Catholicism stated and discussed, which is of course the point and purpose of the "Dialogue." The passage of time has in fact added little or nothing to the force of the Protestant argument as More here sets it down. Just as with competing social, so again with competing religious ideals, he had looked down the vista of four centuries and seen the end of the road.

The "Dialogue," however, opens, as was said, topically and even trivially. A priest, who had been compelled to abjure his errors and been put to public penance, was at the moment the talk of the town—one Bilney, a prophet of judgment in respect of his clerical brethren, whom he denounced, and a teacher of Protestantism in respect of his spiritual father—Latimer—whom he presently brought over to his views. With criticism of this man's condemnation had been coupled criticism of the burning at Paul's Cross of Tyndale's New Testament, the motive assumed in both cases being the resentment at the attack on clerical morals and privileges. The Messenger was frankly critical of these affairs. To require men to renounce their convictions by the sanction of the stake and to cause books to be discredited by the symbolism of incineration—what had this, the Messenger inquired, to do with charity and the examples of the Holy Fathers? "For," as he observed, "they say that the holy fathers used only to dispute with heretics, teaching them and convicting them by

scripture, and not by faggots. And that by that way the faith went well toward¹ . . . whereas now men abhor this cruelty in the Church. And they that seemed turned think still the things that they dare not say. And of the ashes of one heretic springeth up many. And that now we make the fashion of Christendom to seem all turned quite upside down."²

So the passage runs with more to the same effect, and so little truth is there in the familiar notion that sixteenth-century persecutors knew no better! More's Messenger is not less persuasive than Milton or than Mill and, if Puritanism had never produced the "Areopagitica" or Rationalism the "Essay on Liberty," England could still have boasted that toleration had early found a cogent spokesman amongst the masters of English prose. Cogent, but not entirely convinced!

For More was too experienced a statesman, and maybe too subtle a lawyer, to argue this issue in the abstract. He knew that logic must not lose its hold on life and that the limitations of license cannot be academically discerned, and he orders his thesis so as to fit the facts with which he is confronted—the fact of Bilney, the fact of Tyndale, the fact of Luther, considered both as representative men and as political events. To each of these he first devotes a section of his book, and only later turns to discuss "fourthly and finally," as he says, "the war and fighting against infidels and the condemnation of heretics to death."

Such being the plan of the "Dialogue," we come first to the case of Bilney! If he was guiltless, then either he had not preached such things as were said or else those things were not heresy. Now, the practices which Bilney had denounced were the worshipping of images, the praying to saints and the going on pilgrimages; and More makes so bold as to declare that no good Christian man was

¹ i.e. forward.

² Engl. Works, p. 110.

in doubt of their orthodoxy. But the Messenger, though in no uncertainty himself, insists on calling them into question so as to see what his collocutor had to say. As to the first, More observes that the condemnation of graven images was understandable enough when idolatry was rife—though even in Jewry qualified by the simulacra of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies—but that it was without application to men for whom God had become incarnate and who had His figure hanging upon the cross present to their minds. Then, as for the invocation and worship of saints, it seemed to him that here criticism took the colour of diabolical malignity. All honouring of creatures, whether princes or parents or whosoever they may be to whom honour is due, was involved and menaced in this attack upon the noblest of created things. As for the rest, the world knew well enough that the Church worshipped the saints, not as gods, but as good servants of God.

To the criticism of pilgrimages that follows—to the arguments that no saint can accomplish so much as Christ; that Christ, and the saints likewise, are no more present in one spot than another; and that any supposition to the contrary is the result of image-worship—More, whilst admitting the obscurity that hangs about the whole subject, in effect answers thus. It is plain from the Scriptures—from the case, for example, of the troubled pool at Bethesda—that God, either to show favour to a saint or to reward faith in a believer or to check unbelief in a locality, has a way of according special distinction to particular places; and, this being so, the faithful do well to congregate there just as men drew to Jerusalem after the raising of Lazarus. "Surely we were worse than Jews," he cries, "if we would be so negligent that where God worketh miracle we list not once go move our foot thitherward," and with that the "Dialogue" takes a new turn and enters upon the subject of miracles.

It needs to be observed, perhaps, in order to approach More's discussion of the subject in complete freedom from some widespread eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prejudices, that the accumulating evidence of what we call the supernatural shows at the present time no sign of diminution. Contrary to the view that Lecky put forward in his "History of the Spirit of Rationalism,"¹ testimony to the presence in human affairs of the occult and the miraculous has not progressively died down with the advance of human knowledge. A man, if he mixes freely with his fellow-creatures, can hear, not infrequently at first hand, perhaps as many strange tales to-day as ever men did of occurrences unaccountable on any so-called natural hypothesis and improbable, to say the least, on any fraudulent one. Or, if he prefers the witness of the written to the spoken word, let him take a look at Father Thurston's judicious study of a large assortment of psychic phenomena in his book on "The Church and Spiritualism," at some well-authenticated examples of miracle in the narrower sense in Miss Dorothy Kerin's "Living Touch," Trochu's "Miscellany of Witness to the Powers of the *Curé d'Ars*," Dr. Le Bec's "Medical Proof of the Miraculous," or Dr. Marchand's "Facts of Lourdes and the Medical Bureau," or again at some one or other of the attestations² to the still unfinished story of Theresa Neumann of Konnersreuth, and he will hardly deny the perennial truth of Hamlet's time-honoured observation to Horatio. The truth is that, unless all human testimony is to be discarded offhand as worthless and all supernatural providences or malevolences dismissed as absurd, there are plainly more things in heaven and earth than can be covered by what passes under the name of Naturalism.

¹ "History of Rationalism," I, p. 145: "All history shows that, in exact proportion to the intellectual progress of nations, the accounts of miracles taking place among them become rarer and rarer, until at last they entirely cease." This was written in the 'sixties of last century.

² See, for instance, Roy and Joyce's book "Theresa Neumann."

There is this further to be noticed. Whilst no single detected case of fraudulent miracle—nor, for the matter of that, a thousand of them—can be finally conclusive against supernaturalism, which has no quarrel with the rule of law so long as, like other rules, it permits of exceptions, a single sufficiently authenticated psychic phenomenon so gravely embarrasses the determinist philosophy of Naturalism, as to render it highly suspect. Given the character of the evidence of which he is required to take account, the student of history will do more justice to his subject with a working hypothesis of two worlds than with a working hypothesis of one. For at any moment the conception of the universe as a system of immutable law is liable to illustrate T. H. Huxley's definition of Herbert Spencer's idea of a joke—at any moment, that is to say, it may afford a lively example of a theory killed by a fact. So much so, indeed, that the Bible may appear to some minds to be a more, rather than a less credible book by reason of its acquaintance with and recognition of such psychic phenomena as appear in the stories of the Witch of Endor and of Balaam's Ass. And if the student of history were to emancipate himself from the predispositions of natural scientists and treat the evidence of his documents as gravely when they deal with extraordinary occurrences as when they deal with familiar types of phenomena, he would once more find that he was living in a world quite as amenable, to say no more, to the philosophy of Bossuet as to that of Hume or even of Harnack.

The famous argument against miracles of the eighteenth-century Scotsman has indeed of late been roughly handled by Professor A. E. Taylor in (and the occasion is, perhaps, not the least significant part of the circumstance) the lecture which preserves the memory of Leslie Stephen. "We are apparently told," observes the Professor, in reference to Hume's view, "that assent should always be based upon a

careful weighing of the direct and indirect evidence on both sides of a question, and this is, then, strangely enough made the ground for asserting that, if only an alleged occurrence is unusual enough, we need not weigh the evidence produced for it. We may confidently dismiss our witnesses unheard."¹ "The main result really reached" in Hume's Essay, is, he adds, "that, in point of fact, men find it hard to believe the marvellous, and, if the marvel is sufficiently astounding, they refuse to believe. In plain language, this ought to mean that no one ever does believe in the reality of a sequence of events quite unlike the routine of his customary experience."² However, as the critic subsequently notices, it is not Hume's purpose to make "customary experience" the "rational justification for our beliefs about the course of events." The mind of the philosopher is too sceptical and logical for that. All belief, he is really insinuating, is sensational rather than rational.

Compare with this outlook upon miracle of the eighteenth-century sceptic that of the nineteenth-century latitudinarian, and the subject will have been sufficiently surveyed to enable More's own standpoint to be effectively considered. Here is Harnack's view, which incorporates and modifies Matthew Arnold's more familiar opinion:—

"Miracles do not happen; but of the marvellous and inexplicable there is plenty. In our present state of knowledge we have become more careful, more hesitating in our judgment in regard to the stories of the miraculous which we have received from antiquity. . . . That a storm was quieted by a word, we do not believe, and we shall never again believe; but that the lame walked, the blind saw, and the deaf heard will not be so summarily dismissed as an illusion."³

¹ "Philosophical Studies," pp. 344, 345.

³ "What is Christianity?" p. 28.

² *Ibid.*, p. 350.

Whether a clear mind should be content to see miracle thus differentiated from the miraculous, or the weather regarded as less susceptible to supernatural influences than the human body, are problems perhaps better suited to treatment by the acute French rather than the laborious German intellect. But, however that may be, the student of history need do no more than recognise their existence to see that the only solid ground beneath his feet in this much-agitated question is, not the familiarity of the occurrence, but the credibility of the witness. In other or at least in complementary words, a world, so plainly mysterious as ours, postulates for even the most modest understanding of its truth and beauty some readiness for mystery in the mind's outlook. But let the mind which promises to be reckoned the most powerful of our time speak to this point. "Thé fairest thing we can experience," observes Einstein, "is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle."¹

Such, then, are the prolegomena that a student might seem to require before attempting to estimate the value of More's discussion of miracle; and hardly without them will the relevant passages of the "Dialogue" be apprehended. More knew, as no lover and translator of Lucian's "Philopseudes" could fail to know, what a lot of idle tales get about and what a lot of foolish people believe them. In Aubrey's Letters² there is a story of his amusing himself whilst out riding at night by crossing himself and exclaiming, "Jesu Maria, do you not see that prodigious dragon in the sky?" and so gradually moving all his companions from dissent to assent until they said they saw it too. But he did not for that fall into the opposite error of under-credulity or fail to observe that

¹ Einstein, "The World as I See It," pp. 4-5.

² P. 463.

"*substitution*" is just as certainly, if not just as frequently a disease of the human intellect as *superstition*. He saw no less clearly that all the world's a wonder than that all the world's a stage, and rested his argument for belief in miracles upon the fact. The passage in the "Dialogue" in which he gives expression to this view is indeed so characteristic of his grave-faced humour as to be worth reproduction here. After extracting from the Messenger an admission that his own word would be sufficient to attest the truth of a miraculous event, he proceeds to observe that he is about to record an occurrence fully as marvellous in his eyes as the raising of a dead man to life.

There had been, it appeared, in the parish of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, in which he was once resident before his move to Chelsea, a young man and woman, both of them still alive and able to give evidence, who had got married in their parish church—a church not, it may be said in passing, in any degree noted for the occurrence there of miracles. The bride was subsequently escorted in the usual manner to her bed by certain women of good reputation; and there the bridegroom presently joined her, all the rest of the company going their various ways and leaving the two alone. And that night or, to be accurate—and here More seems to hesitate in telling the tale—a little later "except it happened a little afore . . . the seed of them twain turned in the woman's body first into blood and after into shape of man child. And . . . she . . . was within the year delivered of a fair boy, and forsooth it was not then"—for (as he insists) he saw it himself—"passing the length of a foot." Yet now, and he was sure of it, this same boy was an inch longer than himself. "How long ago did this happen?" asks his interlocutor.

"By my faith," he replies, "about twenty-one years. And me thinketh," he adds a moment later, "that this is as great a miracle as the raising of a dead man."¹

¹ Engl. Works, p. 131.

So with a somewhat broad handling of the facts of life and a somewhat more rollicking humour than has always been held seemly, does the "Dialogue" leave the reader without excuse, if he does not attune his mind to mystery. Would he credit it, More inquires of the Messenger, if ten honest men of good substance declared that Our Lady of Ipswich had helped them severally beyond what was in the power of craft or nature to perform. And the Messenger replies, "No . . . not and there were ten and twenty. . . . For every miracle hath but one record[er], and yet he not credible in his own cause. And so never a miracle well proved."

"I like well your wisdom," rejoins More, "that ye be so circumspect that ye will nothing believe without good, sufficient and full proof." But suppose now, More goes on to inquire, that some ten young women, not of any special reputation for probity, were to say that at their confessions at a pardon a reputable friar had given them all alike as a penance to lie with him, would not that be a reason for supposing that some of them anyhow spoke the truth? The unwary Messenger replies that he would have believed them all. But, objects More, this would be to give but one witness apiece to each occurrence. Enough, the Messenger returns, for a statement of the kind, since the friar was likely given to women, however holy he appeared. "Ye deny not," pursues More, "but God may as easily do a good turn by miracle as any man may do an evil by nature," and the Messenger agrees. "Well," concludes More, "see now what a good way ye be in, that are of your own good, godly mind more ready to believe two simple women that a man will do nought (*i.e.* wrong), than ten or twenty men that God will do good."¹

The question of fraud remains to be considered. Every student of Shakespeare's "Henry VI" will remember the scene at St. Alban's,² where the too-simple King hastens to

¹ Engl. Works, p. 133.

² "Henry VI," Part II, Act ii, Sc. 1.

give praise to God for the miraculous cure at the Saint's shrine of a man born blind and become lame, only to find, when better wits than his own get to work upon the matter, that the fellow is a rogue and a much fitter object for whipping than thanksgiving. The anecdote, with its incidental tribute to "Duke Humfry's" shrewdness, was one that More had heard his father tell; and he uses it here to illustrate the trickery that then as now embarrasses the whole subject of the supernatural. Not that trickery of the sort was in those days at all as safe a game to play as it is to-day! For at that time more than a man's fingers might easily get burnt. And, if a cynic could make play with the tale of that light lady of "Lempster" who, after posing as a saint to the people and living as a sinner with her paramour, the Prior of the place, was cast in no severer damages by way of penance than the versicle of a Psalm to say and subsequently resumed her whoredoms, this time without any sanctimonious accompaniments, at Calais, virtue could point a moral from the fate of the four Dominicans who went to the stake at Berne in the year 1509 as the result of a sacrilegious hoax involving a supposititious miracle. To these frauds More makes allusion; yet he was optimist enough to believe that fraud was in general exposed, and far from being pessimist enough to think that its bare existence proved all miracles fiction. "What," he asks the Messenger, "if ye find some fair woman painted whose colour ye had weened¹ natural, will ye never after believe that any woman in the world hath a fair colour of herself? And as for the point that we spake of," he continues, "concerning miracles done in our days at divers images where these pilgrimages be, yet could I tell you some such done so openly, so far from all cause of suspicion, and thereto testified in such sufficient wise, that he might seem almost mad that, hearing the whole matter, will

¹ In the original "went," viz. thought.

distrust the miracles."¹ The witnesses to the example that More submits are, however, no longer to be heard; and such account of it as he gives will, like all such cases, be variously explained or explained away.

The circumstances of the case were these. A daughter of Sir Roger Wentworth, a charming girl of twelve, had undergone a phenomenal change of character, become grossly blasphemous and at the same time developed an uncanny power of distinguishing "hallowed" from "unhallowed" objects, where no hint regarding them had been given her. Eventually, moved by some interior impulse, she started off for the shrine of Our Lady of Ipswich, causing astonishment to certain acutely critical persons, whilst on her way there, by showing knowledge of occurrences at a distance, and, when in a state of trance, making observations so astute and learned as to postulate, or at any rate suggest long study of their subject. Then, finally, when at length she reached Ipswich and visited the Virgin's shrine, she became convulsed in view of a whole crowd of witnesses. A "grisly" change—for that expressive word was good old English—came over her face, her mouth twisted, her eyes seemed to be dropping out, and her whole aspect grew terrible to see. Suddenly, however, the convulsion ceased; the devil, if devil it was, went out of her; and she was perfectly healed. More adds a concluding word which shows that all our modern suspiciousness was already alive and active in medieval minds. There was in this case, he says, "no pretext of begging, no suspicion of feigning, no possibility of counterfeiting, no simpleness in the seers." The girl's parents were rich people and by no means pleased about the business; the witnesses were a "great number and many of great worship, wisdom and good experience"; the girl herself was too young to pretend and, besides, subsequently proved her good faith by going into a

¹ Engl. Works, p. 137.

convent, where ever since she had lived "well and graciously"; and, for the rest, the fashion of the thing itself was "too strange for any man to feign."

The case, it may be said in passing, even with such knowledge as More gives us of it, no better admits of the explanation that it was one of mental disease yielding to moral pressure than many of the Gospel Miracles. As Ryle argues in his discussion of the miraculous element in the New Testament,¹ any such supposition is opposed to experience. Diseases characterised by hysterical symptoms do not disappear in so instantaneous a manner. And Knur concludes to something of the same effect in "Christus Medicus."²

On these confines of mind and matter physician and metaphysician are not perhaps at present likely to come to terms. He who spends his time exclusively in the study of physics, whatever form this may take, is liable to conceive the soul as nothing more than a mode of matter and will obviously be less willing to believe in the intervention of unseen beings in human affairs than he who occupies himself with the problems that arise in connection with our innate, but often curiously inoperative conviction of the superiority of spiritual over material things.

The suspicion that Nature, conceived as some kind of a genius or impersonation of the sensuous world around, might prove no better than a blind, brutal, even perhaps sadistic force encircling poor Humanity with immutable or statistical fetters had not, it is true, in More's time taken hold of the imagination of mankind. Yet, as the Messenger notices,³ denial of the miraculous had already insinuated some doubts of the Deity; and an acute critic might perhaps have foreseen the coming intellectual shrinkage from Theism to Deism and from Deism to Atheism or at least its pale,

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, 579, April 1907.

² "Christus Medicus," p. 42, quoted from Felder's "Christ and the Critics," II, p. 345.

³ *Engl. Works*, p. 138.

melancholy shadow shifting fitfully on the agnostic plane. So far, however, as most men were concerned, and the Messenger among them, the evidence of extraordinary occurrences appeared too strong to allow of any general scepticism; and the issue resolved itself into the question whether these phenomena were to be regarded as works of God or delusions of the Devil. The latter opinion seems to the Messenger, faithful churchman as he claims to be, nearly as plausible as the former, for the Devil, all said and done, was out to deceive. More, however, disputes the reasonableness of thus according preference to a creature over the Creator as the source of wonders, but only to be reminded by the Messenger that the intervention of devils between God and Man was not in principle different from the intervention of saints.

And, with that, the "Dialogue" takes a new turn; and the current criticism attending the veneration and invocation of saints is introduced for discussion. The Messenger, though disclaiming sympathy with its tendency, now, upon More's encouragement, states the Protestant case with all the force at his disposal. The Saints, he says, are not so ubiquitous as the proceedings of their worshippers seem to suggest, nor nearer to us than God, nor such good mediators as Christ. And the honour paid them, for all the fine distinctions of the Schoolmen between *Dulia*¹ and *Hyperdulia*² and *Latria*,³ is not really different in kind from that rendered to God Himself, for men kneel and pray to them and cense their images as in divine worship. Besides, how easily do such devotions cause piety to be cheated! Does not Chaucer affirm that a saint's relic, if we knew all the truth about it, would likely enough turn out to be a bone of some holy Jew's sheep? Do not the priests display the head of the same saint in two places at once and take money in both?

¹ Worship of Man to Man.

² Worship of Angels and Saints.

³ Worship of God.

TYNDALE AND THE "DIALOGUE"

In short, these pilgrimages and miracles and mammoth¹ detract from the honour due to God instead of promoting it; and it is no wonder if the Devil gets to work among them.

"Surely," rejoins More, "I owe² you very good thank; for ye have not faintly defended your part . . . but ye have said therein, I cannot tell whether as much as any man may say, but certainly I suppose as much as ye either have heard any man say or can yourself say."³ And, if all the Messenger had urged were to be true, as More goes on to admit, the target would be, not merely hit, but struck clean away. But to come to the point. The common ground between Catholic and Protestant is, he claims, plainly wider than that between Catholic and Pagan or Catholic and Jew, and can be found in the Two Testaments; and, the Messenger agreeing to this, the Bible becomes, so to speak, the site of the dispute and the possession of it the matter of the argument.

More proceeds to confront the Messenger with Christ's injunction to His hearers to see to it that their righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Was this, he asks, specially addressed to the Apostles, or generally to the whole Christian flock? The Messenger replies that it was meant for the bishops and rulers of the Church as a warning against laying heavy burdens upon poor men's backs. What, then, asks More blandly, does the Messenger make of Christ's injunction to do such things as those who sit in Moses's chair command and yet not such things as they do? He meant, replies the Messenger, that rulers both Jewish and Christian were to be obeyed when they enjoined the precepts of the Law and the Gospel. But what, More persists, of the obedience inculcated to the scribe and the Pharisee in spite of the loads they laid? The Messenger is embarrassed by the question and drifts into some irrelevance. Christ, he argues, came to call us to a law of liberty; and submission to all the

¹ i.e. idols.

² In the original "can."

³ Engl. Works, p. 141.

rules of the Church might seem almost to involve a stricter servitude than submission to all the precepts of the Jews. More denies this exegesis. Compared to the commandment of circumcision, for instance, the rules of the Church appear easy and, as exemplified in the duties of certain days of obligation, are also light in comparison with Christ's precepts respecting idle or angry words, watching and praying, martyrdom and death. In fact, the easy yoke and the light burden which are promised are plainly the consequences, not of any emancipation from the Church's laws, but of the sweetness of hope foretasting heaven. But to the main issue! What was meant by the word to Peter that his faith should not fail? Was it a gift of fidelity and of merely personal significance? Clearly not, for Peter's faith did in fact fail him! The promise was therefore, it seems, given him in his official capacity as head of the Church, as is indeed made clear by the envoi: "And thou being one of these days converted, confirm and strengthen thy brethren." For, if the promise had been personal, then must also the charge to feed the sheep of the Christian flock have been personal likewise.

That is well enough, comments the Messenger, yet a doubt remains. Charity counts for as much as faith, and charity has grown cold. What if it has, More retorts, Faith is much easier kept than love and also better safeguarded by God, Who secures the preservation of the theory, though not of the practice of virtue. "If faith were gone, all were gone, and then had God here no church at all."¹

At this point the argument, which has so far been advancing, as if by antechamber and corridor, enters the great hall of assize. Faith is called upon to give its evidence, and the credentials and implications of Faith are considered. It is stated by More to be "the first substantial difference discerning Christian men from heathen, as reason is the differ-

¹ Engl. Works, p. 144.

ence dividing man from all kinds of brute beasts." And so much the disputants have in common. But the Messenger is forthwith made to expose the new Protestant theory of knowledge by opposing belief to reflection:—"I take reason for plain enemy to faith"¹ he says. "Ye take peradventure wrong," observes More drily. For Catholic theology suffers no contradiction, but only co-operation between Faith and Reason. Though comment here might well be held superfluous, our English debt to More is not discharged unless we recognise that he was opposing in the region of the human soul a disintegration even graver than the coming disintegration of European society, a divorce more disgraceful than the coming dissolution of the King's marriage. Reason and Faith were born for each other. If Faith takes her spring from Reason, Reason rests suspended from Faith. To believe anything whatever, we have to take it upon trust that there is a real correspondence between the conclusions of thought and the nature of things. And this correspondence is now even less obvious than once it was. The world of sense is not the world of science. A table, to be explicit, gives no indication either to sight or touch that it is the universe of revolving electrons that it now appears to the informed intelligence to be. And, if we prefer the witness of the intellect to the witness of eye and hand, we exchange at once a visible for an invisible world and engage in a venture involving a child's confidence in some Power, not ourselves, that makes for truth at least, if not for righteousness. So the argument for faith might be put to-day, and, if its validity be conceded, it may be said to establish the place of faith in the apparatus of knowledge.

Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere, the Messenger declares; and More agrees with him. "Whoso will come to God must needs believe." But what shall he believe? In a world of

¹ Engl. Works, p. 148.

error who shall afford a guarantee of truth? Again it is common ground between the disputants that Christ is the guarantor of the inerrancy of faith. But how the guarantee operates they are not agreed. In the Messenger's view Christ is to be found in the Scriptures; in More's view He is present both through the Holy Spirit in the Church and Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. And More in support of his opinion points out that Christ left no book behind Him. The New Testament was not in being when His promise to be always with His followers was made. And, had he cared to drive the point home, More might doubtless have added that the recognition of the Christian Scriptures was as much the subject of development as the Papal Supremacy, although the idea of both alike was fast fixed in the primitive Church tradition. For, as regards the former, the New Testament Canon was still incomplete in A.D. 150, the list in the famous Muratorian fragment of the same date being actually incorrect; and it was not until the close of the fourth century that the inspired literature had been sifted from the rest and the present collection formed.

To the Messenger, however, as to many after him who have taken the Bible for a book ready bound and delivered by Christ to His disciples, these difficulties did not present themselves in their fulness; and he saw in its pages the exclusive source of Christian doctrine. For all that, More soon had him in a dilemma. Assume the Bible to be the sole depository of faith, and it follows that the Church, being so constituted according to Christ's promise that its faith should not fail, must have the right understanding of it. Now, if the Church does not come to this right understanding by chance, which is in its nature uncertain, nor by reason, which the Messenger holds in contempt, then it must be guided into truth by grace—by the Spirit of God; and to this the Messenger agrees. Upon which More observes that the Church's teaching about the veneration of saints and relics should in

that case be no idolatry but just as correct as in regard to other things bearing upon salvation. Thus had the discussion worked its way round to the original matters in dispute, and the Messenger by his original appeal to the Bible and his subsequent acceptance of the Church as its natural interpreter defeated his own effort to set up the one against the other.

A kind of appendix follows in which More explores the not irrelevant question why it was that men of good intelligence who started to study Scripture for themselves were producing such defiant paradoxes running counter to long-received opinion. It is a question, *mutatis mutandis*, that never grows old; and he answers it as many would answer it still. The innovators have been too much concerned to show the extent of their studies and to prove the excellence of their wits. The Messenger complains that this is harsh criticism. But More contends that he is judging only by what is open and evident, and even complains that some Reformers have "such a scabbed itch of vainglory" that, though all the world were the worse for their preaching and their own life were at stake besides, they would want to be in the pulpit. Would he, then, the Messenger inquires, condemn the mere study of Scripture by itself? He answers like the good Humanist that he was. "There was never thing written in this world that can in any wise be comparable with any part of holy Scripture. And yet I think other liberal science a gift of God also, and not to be cast away, but worthy to wait and as handmaids to give attendance upon divinity."¹ But to the claims of reason the Messenger is as deaf as to the claims of tradition. "What greater enemy can ye find to faith," he cries, "than reason is, which counter-pleadeth faith in every point? And would ye then send them twain forth to school together that can never agree together but be ready to fight together and either scratch out other's eyes by the way?"² More puts the

¹ Engl. Works, p. 151.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

case for Reason. But the Messenger will have none of it. The senses, he maintains, are better guides than the wits. At that More robes himself in wig and gown and hurries his adversary into the box. How does the Messenger know, he demands, that Our Lord was born of a virgin? "By Scripture," replies the other. And how does he know he should believe Scripture, pursues the astute lawyer. "By faith," returns the doomed examinee. What then does faith say about it, he is asked. It tells him, he says, that Scripture is true and written by God's inspiration. And how does he know that he should believe God, More continues. The Messenger complains of this question, since every man is aware of the reply. 'But not any horse or ass,' observes the lawyer! 'Only perhaps Balaam's Ass, "good, reasonable ass" that he was,' ventures the other, now *in extremis*. 'If man may know the cause,' continues the silver tongue of the examiner, 'but not brute beasts, what is the cause of it?' "Marry!" replies the poor Messenger, 'because man has reason and beasts have not.' "Reason must he needs have then," concludes More, "that shall perceive what he should believe. And so must reason not resist faith, but walk with her." And with that the talk expands into an admirable little dissertation upon the collaborative work of the religious spirit and the humane intelligence in the right understanding of Scripture. "And albeit," More concludes, "poets be with many men taken but for painted words, yet do they much help the judgment, and make a man among other things well furnished of one special thing without which all learning is half lame." "What is that?" says the Messenger. "Marry!" More replies, "a good mother wit. And therefore are in mine opinion these Lutherans in a mad mind, that would now have all learning, save Scripture only, clean cast away. . . ."¹

¹ Engl. Works, p. 153. Single inverted commas in the above epitome and in the next chapter signify a paraphrase; double commas a quotation.

THE LAST OF THE "DIALOGUE"

THE reader of humanist tendencies who has persevered thus far with the "Dialogue" may perhaps at this point feel disposed to plead for a halt, if not actually to cry for mercy. "Must you drive me farther," he may say, "along a path so paved with platitude? Any fool can see that the Church preceded the Bible and authenticated its inspiration; and all sensible men should agree that faith is inevitably doomed without the concurrence of reason."

To such rational complaints the only answer to be made is that we are seeking full understanding rather than mere acquaintance with a mind in its own view busily engaged in the exposure of fallacies and paradoxes equally disastrous to theology and civilisation. To see things as More saw them is to understand his impatience, his strong words, his mortal struggle with the Reformers. In the full development of his life and opinions the argument of the "Dialogue" has therefore a necessary and significant place. For just as in the "Utopia" the Communist theory is exposed to consideration in a series of dissolving views, so in the "Dialogue" is the Lutheran theology explored to satiety in a series of concentric conversations. Let those, then, who feel strong pursue their way onwards from circle to circle, and those who feel faint repose by the roadside until the "Dialogue" is ended.

It is an observation of the Messenger's that, if things were as More had stated and the Church a necessary guide to the interpretation of Scripture, then God would have written the Bible so badly that He had better not have given it to the

world at all. This elicits from More the remark which might have been made to-day, so little does the lapse of centuries change us, that it is "almost a common thing among men so to speak sometimes as though they could amend the works of God." He adds the comment that, if God were to call us all into council and make no changes until we were all agreed what they should be, nothing would be done until dooms-day.¹

No less shrewd, perhaps, is More's observation, offered in support of the place of tradition in Catholic theology, that the Apostles were more likely to have spoken than to have written plainly, since the written word ran the danger of falling into the hands of pagans. With the ease of the skilled advocate he takes the points which time and circumstance have done nothing to overthrow—such an obvious point, for instance, regarding development of doctrine as that knowledge has to come gradually, the milk being given before the meat, and much left to be said when the learners could better bear it. The "very fond foundation" of all Luther's heresies he finds, in fact, in the notion that a man need believe nothing that he cannot prove out of Scripture, which, as he notices, soon comes to mean that Scripture proves nothing which Luther likes to deny. Of the perpetual virginity of Our Lady no word, he points out, is found in the Gospels, yet what man dare suppose otherwise than as the Church has always taught, or imagine that any child of earth was ever conceived where the celestial Child had once dwelt? Scripture, he repeats, is "the best learning any man can have, if one take the right way in the learning." For "it is, as a good holy saint saith, so marvelously tempered, that a mouse may wade therein and an elephant be drowned therein."² "And of all wretches worst shall he walk that, forcing little of³ the faith of Christ's

¹ Engl. Works, p. 156.

² *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³ *i.e.* attaching little force to.

Church, cometh to the Scripture of God to look and try therein whether the Church believe aright or not. For either doubteth he whether Christ teach His Church true or else whether Christ teacheth it at all or not."¹

The Messenger, however, is as English as he can be, and, as More visualises him, not at all the type of man to be caught by craft, charm a lawyer never so wisely. The Bible, he persists, is after all God's Word; and he prefers to believe what his own God-implanted reason tells him about its meaning, even though all the world be against him. More approves this objection for whatever it may be worth, but contents himself with inquiring what would happen to the Messenger should Bible texts again reveal some such an ambiguity as provoked the great conflict between Athanasius and Arius. The Messenger replies that he will answer More as in his hearing Dr. Mayo made answer to King Henry VII's inquiry how he would have acted in Joseph's place when Potiphar's wife solicited his attentions. "By my troth, sir," Dr. Mayo had replied, "and it like your grace, I cannot tell you what I *would* have done, but I can tell you what I *should* have done." And the King had approved the answer.

But what, then, *should* the Messenger have done, persists More, had he lived in the world of Arius and Athanasius? The Messenger replies that he should have prayed to God for guidance and drawn lots for a decision. Lots, More rejoins (and his answer has all the stamp of his personality upon it), are all very well when it is a choice between good things. But suppose the Messenger to be looking for a wife and the selection of a wife to resemble, as Sir John More used to declare, the putting of a hand into a bag with seven snakes to every one eel inside it, would the Messenger then, in face of such heavy odds, bank upon prayer and lottery or even think it right to do so, since there was no necessity? The Messenger replies that it is precisely necessity which the

¹ Engl. Works, p. 163.

circumstances assumed in their argument give rise to. 'But now,' returns More, 'if God should say to you that he had discovered to someone the truth of the matter in debate and bid you go to him for the solution.' The Messenger replies that in this event he would go gratefully for guidance to the man indicated. 'Would you believe him,' More asks, 'if he told you that Arius was a heretic, though previously you had thought Arius to be correct?' 'What other course would be open to me?' rejoins the Messenger. 'And even if all the proof given you were clean contrary to your own formed conclusions,' continues More, 'would you still believe the man right?' The Messenger is obliged to reply in the affirmative, for the consultant had by hypothesis been appointed by God. 'And, even if he told you that he did not know whether his opinion could be proved by Scripture, would you still accept his word?' pursues More. Again the Messenger assents. 'What then,' More asks, 'had the Messenger to say of his confident interpretation of the texts in a contrary sense?' The Messenger lamely replies that he must reckon they were otherwise intended than he had thought. 'Man or woman, would you equally believe a God-given counsellor?' inquires More. Once more the answer is affirmative. 'And would a company of people similarly gifted command your assent?' More insists. The Messenger agrees. 'Then,' concludes More, 'if you think with the rest of us that God commands us to believe the Church, you have in the Church the appointed authoritative man presupposed by the discussion and are "full answered."'

The Messenger, however, struggles long before surrender. Does God, he asks, really command us to believe the Church in all points of faith? Why, we are ourselves the Church—part and parcel of it—and to command us to believe the Church is to command us to believe ourselves. It is Christ whom God commands us to hear and believe.

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Now at last, returns More, they are in agreement. If Christ is to be heard and obeyed—and in all things, as the Messenger repeats—then is the Church also, for He has so ordained. But, if men compose the Church, resumes the Messenger, the Church is divided and who can say which party is right? "Ye take that," More quietly persists, "for a great doubt and a thing very perplex (sic) which seemeth [to] me very plain. For either first the Church hath the truth and belief all one way till some one or some few begin the change, and then, though all be yet of the Church, till some by their obstinacy be gone out or put out, yet is it no doubt but if I will believe the Church, I must believe them that still believe the way which all the whole believed before."¹

So much for what was well-established. As for things in doubt or undetermined, More turned to a general council or to general consent to settle them. It is noticeable and notable that he does not mention the Pope, not even when he quotes the famous promise regarding the gates of hell that was made to St. Peter. He was presently to die for the Papal Supremacy; and, had that not been so, it might have been reasonable to argue that the Papacy was in his eyes no essential organ of the Church. For he was not as we have seen, by nature ultramontane; and it is only, as he debates, that the logic of his argument compels him to appreciate the full force of the papal position and translates as we might say a "notional" assent to the Papal claims into a "real" one. It is this that makes his life so striking a witness to the Petrine tradition. Not any convention or association, but an ever-growing conviction that St. Paul's conception of the Church as a society with one body as well as one spirit required no less than the Papal supremacy, brought him to the block. With all his quickness of mind he had, in fact, the Englishman's

¹ Engl. Works, p. 167.

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characteristic slowness in coming to conclusions. Without that quality, indeed, he might well have wearied of arguing the matter out with anyone so obstinate as he makes the Messenger. He poses his adversary at last with the searching question whether the Christian community, having had knowledge of the truth at the beginning, lost it again, or retains it always as long as the Church continues. "Here," we read, "the Messenger began a little to stagger."¹ And it was no wonder, for More had pricked the weakest place in his armour. If the Church was ever guided, if truth was ever guaranteed, why did guidance cease and the guarantee come presently to nothing? Newman in his Anglican days, as students of the Oxford Movement know, endeavoured to elude the difficulty by supposing that the divine guidance had been withdrawn or modified, once the Christology of the Church had been sufficiently defined. But this explanation ceased in the end to satisfy him, and not unnaturally, since, amongst other difficulties, it left the doctrine of the Eucharist a prey to controversy.

"God," as More puts it to the Messenger, "tellethe you in Scripture that He would be with His Church to the end of the world. . . . Except we should think that He would be therewith for nothing, wherefore should He be with it but to keep it and preserve it with the assistance of His gracious presence from spiritual mischief specially, and of all other specially from infidelity and idolatry? . . . Whose assistance being to the Church perpetual, how can it at any time fall from true faith to false errors and heresies?"² Even Luther, More points out, has been obliged to admit the judgment of the Church to be infallible in the separation of Scripture from other writings, and is thus witness against himself in favour of ecclesiastical tradition. The Messenger rather lamely answers that, once the Church tradition had made the canon

¹ Engl. Works, p. 172.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 174.

of Scripture sure, he would attach a greater consequence to Scripture than to the Church's doctrine. More rejoins by reminding him of the King's point in controversy with Luther, that, if God did not suffer the Church to make a mistake as regards the canon of Scripture, then neither could God suffer the Church to make a mistake in the interpretation of Scripture texts. There was, he argues, no point that Luther had more reason to meet than this, yet Luther had never dared to try to meet it. The Messenger, however, expresses no surprise, being, as he says, fully satisfied that the issue admitted of no reply on Luther's part.

At this juncture More, observing that the Messenger's doubts in respect of the praying to saints, the making of pilgrimages and use of images had been incidentally resolved by his general acknowledgment of the Church's authority in regard to the Bible and to belief, suddenly declares for dinner. The Messenger protests that he has yet many questions to agitate, but More has no sooner expressed willingness to hear him out than he draws back again on the pretext that Lady More will be annoyed at any further delay, since it is getting near-noon, and annoyed with him besides for making her husband "muse at his meat." Whereupon More, contenting himself with a thrust at his wife, whose own curiosity, he says, would in similar circumstances not have allowed him to eat until it had been satisfied, takes his guest in to the midday meal.

After the anomalous repast which the English then called dinner but have since named luncheon, and which the French prefer to style breakfast (*déjeuner*), was over, the two men resume their debate once again in More's garden. What was it, More asks, that made the Messenger say that all the morning's discussion had left him as uncertain as before? This, argues the Messenger—that the infallible Church did not perhaps consist of those that More thought, but of those who thought otherwise. They couldn't tell where the Church

really was. At first starting it hid itself from persecution, and it might be that it was hiding itself still and would come out into the open as soon as persecution stopped. Who could say but that the true Church might lie hid in Germany or in Bohemia?

To this More objects that the Protestants are unlike the early Christians in that they are content to assist, though mockingly, at Catholic services, that their minds are inconstant, their views inconsistent, whilst in Saxony there are as many opinions as there are wits, "and all as wise as wild geese."¹ The test of heresy, as St. John indicates,² is the "going out" from the original company of Christians; and so we must not look for the true Church in Bohemia, where the Protestant sectaries have separated themselves from "that Church which . . . was there before them all."³

The Messenger is not to be quelled, however, by any such local refutations. Perhaps, he urges, no place need be assigned for the presence of the true Church. Perhaps all the good men predestinated to salvation, wherever they may be, form that real congregation of Christians which is not as yet to be clearly discerned whilst the Church goes pilgrim through the world.

Why, this, rejoins More, is worse and worse! The Reformers grant first that the Church must needs be infallible, if Christ is not to be openly denied; and then, because it condemns their opinions, they seek to build another in the air. Those predestinated to salvation are well enough as a description of the Church triumphant, but from the idea of the Church militant they are as wide apart as the heaven is from the earth.

But may it not be, the Messenger persists, that it is right believers and right doers everywhere who make up the Church?

That, returns More, is what Luther pretends, and so makes

¹ Engl. Works, p. 179. ² Ep. I, ii, 19. ³ Engl. Works, p. 181.

of the Church a scattered, indeterminate group of good men. If these agree with the Church hitherto so called, then all the things under discussion—the worship of images, prayers to saints, pilgrimages—are *ipso facto* approved. But, if they do not agree, then how is a pagan to choose between them for instruction? In any case preachers of the Messenger's elusive communion are far to seek.

The Messenger fires up at this, and exclaims that there would be more preachers of the reforming party if More's friends did not penalise and burn them.

More in reply makes himself say—unfairly as events were presently to show, for in courage and conviction the Protestants were to leave the Catholics with no evident advantage—that Protestants were not disposed to be martyred for their religion and thereby discovered its nakedness. "I never yet found or heard of anyone in my life," he declares, "but he would forswear your faith to save his life."¹ He is on stronger ground in calling Luther's argument that there can be no sinners in the true Church, since the gates of hell are not to prevail against it, a "frantic" one and its author a "mad man."² For, indeed, as he urges at length in his "Confutation of Friar Barnes's Church," since all men are sinners, this would be to leave no Church at all. "But," he adds, with a welcome touch of beauty, "our Lord in this His mystical body of His Church carried His members, some sick, some whole, and all sickly. . . ."³ "By this Church know we the Scripture; and this is the very Church, and this hath begun at Christ and hath had him for their head, and Saint Peter, his vicar, after him, the head under him, and alway since, the successors of him continually—and have had his holy faith, and his blessed Sacraments and his holy Scriptures delivered, kept and conserved therein by God and his holy spirit."⁴

¹ Engl. Works, p. 183.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

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The Messenger confesses himself now for the most part vanquished, yet the discussion rambles on in appendices. Of the audience of saints and the efficacy of prayer to them, More declares himself to be in no doubt. "And I," he says, "while we see that the things that we pray for we obtain marvel . . . how men can doubt whether the prayers be heard or not."¹ It was, doubtless, a cry from the heart, for he had seen Margaret Roper recover from the sweating sickness in circumstances which to the physician as well as himself seemed no less than miraculous and a direct answer to his petitions.² And to one so sensible as he of the communion of the visible and invisible worlds, prayer to the dead to help us—if we have reason to believe well of them—differed nothing in principle from requests to the living, be they physicians or surgeons, to heal us. As for relics, though there might be fakes among them, this constituted no reason for dismissing them all as fraudulent. Time may have falsified their identity, but is proof at least of their antiquity. At Barking Abbey he had himself been present when, with the Bishop of London there as a guarantor of good faith in the proceedings, some kerchiefs inscribed as Our Lady's with other relics that had come to light through the appearance of a crack in an old image were critically examined and the date of their concealment in the image set down as perhaps four or five hundred years earlier. In a word, the practice of venerating the remains of the dead is so old, if we look at such examples as Jacob's body or Eliseus's bones, that we cannot fairly suppose this time-honoured custom of good men mistaken.

All this, observes the Messenger, is well enough, but does not go to the heart of the matter. In worshipping saints we detract from the worship of God, and in worshipping images we detract from the worship of saints; and this cannot be

¹ Engl. Works, p. 188.

² See Stapleton's Life, p. 70, and Cresacre More's, p. 137.

right. And what, too, has More to say about the gluttony and loose-living that goes on in pilgrimages? What of the habit of degrading saints into craftsmen—St. Loy into a horse-leech, St. Ipolitus into a smith, St. Apoline into a dental surgeon, St. Sythe into a searcher for lost keys? As for St. Wilgefort, what could be sillier than the way women serve her with a peck of oats as, it appears, might be seen at St. Paul's, in the belief that she will disencumber them of their husbands, and this to the point of calling her St. Uncumber? St. Martin is even worse treated, if Pontanus is right in saying that in the town where he is worshipped his image is saluted with rose-water, if the day be fair, but with slops, if it be foul. And other things the Messenger narrates of practices in France which suggest that in indecency and indecorum the English have never been a match for their neighbours across the Channel.

To these allegations on the part of the Messenger More replies that as to the first issue raised, the worship of God is *latria*—that is, a worship of the mind—and different in kind from that given with the body to saints and kings; and as to the second, that the vulgar are not really so simple as to mistake images for the saints themselves. "Take the simplest fool that ye can choose," he says, "and she will tell you that Our Lady herself is in heaven."¹ Finally in regard to the impetration of saints, whilst unlawful petitions cannot be defended, the superstition involved is not really so bad as the Messenger makes out. In necessity a man may well call upon the saints to help him; and the Messenger would most probably be calling upon St. Apoline himself, if his teeth were aching badly.

The Messenger, thus challenged, admits that in such evil case as that he might even call upon the devil, like the gout-stricken Lombard in the story, who, declaring that *ogni aiuto*

¹ Engl. Works, p. 196.

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e bono—all is good that helpeth—was not to be deterred from appealing to Beelzebub by the protests of his wife and acquaintance. But More will not have it this way either; and, giving another turn to the banter, declares that the Messenger, whatever he may say, would never believe in the devil, to the same extent as the Lombard. His likeness was rather to that other Italian who, to the Friar's question in the confessional whether he had meddled in necromancy or had belief in the devil, replied, "Believe in the devil! No, no, Sir, I have work enough to believe in God." So they chaffed on, punning a little, since the matter seemed not too serious. Some misuse of prayers to the saints does not, as More says, show the practice to be in itself immoral. And the fact that people in some countries make a custom of hunting on Good Friday, of singing foul ditties in Whitsuntide processions, of indulging in lewd talk on Sundays and of getting drunk in Lent is not a reason why these seasons should be abolished. The devotions to which the Messenger takes exception have been countenanced by the great doctors of the Church, and, if here and there the people display "invincible ignorance"¹ and some little resulting superstition, no great harm comes of it.

* * * * *

It was a fortnight later when the Messenger came back to Chelsea. He had in the meanwhile been up at the University, which was perhaps the younger of the two famous sisters, and had renewed his argumentative strength like an eagle. Contact with student friends and that 'hard clash of mind with mind' which is of the essence of University life, had, as it soon appeared, revived his questionings; and, although his reproduction at Cambridge—if Cambridge it was—of More's discourses had made a distinct impression, he reported that the treatment of Bilney, the suppression of Luther's works and the execution of heretics were still exercising the

¹ Engl. Works, p. 202.

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minds of the freshmen. Some of them, indeed, were especially critical of the last of these measures as a thing far removed from charity and inconsistent with the clerical vocation. Persecution, for all that people are fond of saying about human progress and changed ideas, clearly shocked some young men's minds then, as happily in England, it does still ; and the lapse of four centuries affords little occasion for supposing that young men talked out their thoughts and expressed their sentiments less fully, even if perhaps more cautiously, at that time than they do at present. As for dialectic, not to say sophistry, it was as much in the vogue as always.

The Messenger, it appeared, had found one stout dissentient from More's exposition of the relation between the Bible and the Church amongst his hearers. This controversialist declared that More had got the better of the argument by taking the sword himself and leaving only a shield to his adversary. Let the weapons be reversed, and the results would be more even. 'Do you not believe the Church because it speaks the truth?' this disputant had inquired of the Messenger and, upon an affirmative reply being given as was intended, had then gone on to ask whether the Messenger knew this otherwise than by Scripture. The Messenger came to the conclusion that he did not. Whereupon the disputant declared that in three words he had driven his adversary to the wall, since the Messenger had now admitted that he believed the Church only on the authority of Scripture, not Scripture on the authority of the Church. Thus was the good man left gaping and wondering what More would find to say in answer.

His mentor on being appealed to reminds him of the story of one Caius, a Cambridge poet, who boasted that he would prove a boy of his acquaintance to be an ass. "Do you not grant," he asked the boy ingenuously, "that everything with two ears is an ass?" But when the boy said, "No!", the poet

was stumped. Had the Messenger been more circumspect, he would have answered that it was not the Church he believed because it spoke truth, but the truth of the thing spoken because the Church spoke it; and, if the disputant had then inquired how he knew that the Church was to be trusted, he should have replied that it was because God taught the Church, and not because of the Scripture witness. Before ever the Bible was there—in the days between Adam and Noe—there existed a church with a true faith—a "congregation of right believing people." It had been the Spirit of God, and no book, that first moved men to recognise and respond to the Word of life.

It is at this point in the discussion that More, echoing the opinion of one of his favourite commentators—"that good and great clerk, Nicholas de Lyra"—puts forward the view that there were many souls saved at the time of the flood who repented, too late indeed for their safety in this world, but not for their safety in another. Here was comfortable doctrine; and it was characteristic of his wide humanity and profound confidence in the love of God to expand it again, with Master Nicolas's aid, in his treatise on the Passion so as to include his beloved pagan-humanists and indeed pagans altogether, of whom he requires no more to bring them within reach of salvation than a belief that God exists and is the rewarder of such as seek Him.

From such kindly speculations the Messenger recalls the talk to the case of Bilney. It is clear that More had heard enough of that unfortunate clergyman to set him down as peevish and perverse and to suspect him of want of balance. The Messenger, on the other hand, had found Bilney reputed "a good man and very devout." To judge from More's account, he was what would nowadays be called a Bible Christian. He took, it appears, the Scriptures so literally that at one time he would not so much as say his matins without

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obeying the injunction to shut the door of his room, until presently, reacting against this outlook, he became somewhat light and libertarian.

All the result, comments the Messenger, of saying the offices! But More maintains that it is not the offices, but the saying of them so slowly, and in effect superstitiously, that had been Bilney's undoing. Where he should have been devout and diligent, he had shown himself fearful and scrupulous, and so for very weariness had fallen from one extreme into its opposite.

The conversation drifts on into a discussion of the greater ease with which evidence is admitted in ecclesiastical as opposed to civil cases. "Is not this . . . wondrous . . ." cries the Messenger, "that, whereas in the matter of a little money no law receiveth any witness but honest and credible, the law made by the Church should in so great a matter, so highly touching the utter destruction of a man in body and goods, with a death the most painful that can be devised, admit and receive a person infamed, and give faith and credence to an infidel?"

It is a bad world, More replies, and there are bad people enough in it to bear untrue evidence. But it must be remembered that false witnesses expose themselves by their failure to agree and that wise judges use their wits to administer the law discreetly. It is so important in the public interest that grave crimes such as murder, theft, heresy and treason should not go unpunished that the Law accepts less in the way of proof in respect of them than it seeks in mere cases of contract, where, besides, it is the fault of both parties if the obligation has not been clearly put into writing. But, however that may be, Bilney's case was not one that had been decided on any insufficient evidence. Above twenty men, and reputable men too, had sworn to his guilt.

The Messenger replies that he has heard that Bilney had

witnesses enough to swear the opposite, but that, anyhow, in the event of a conflict of evidence, it was better that a guilty man should go unpunished than an innocent man be convicted.

Where the matter, as here, is the content of a sermon, More rejoins, once affirmative testimony has thoroughly probed the point, to call negative testimony is not much to the purpose. Those who deny that certain things, well attested by others, were said may well have been inattentive or forgetful. Or again the preacher may have said different things.

All the same, argues the Messenger, everything should be heard that any man has to witness on the subject and the accused should have the best of any doubt.

"What were best God woteth for I cannot tell,"¹ More returns, in words which show how much he felt the perplexity surrounding the whole matter. But, whatever the best might be, the wisdom of the whole world, as he says, was at one against the Messenger, and, if the Messenger's views deserved to prevail, it was least of all in regard to heresies. To fall from faith is to lose hold on truth; and an oath is so much the less to be trusted. A preacher of falsehood could therefore make sure of enough false witness amongst the unbelieving to enable him to say pretty much what he liked with impunity.

Yet, urges the Messenger, exception would be taken to heretical witnesses. For that, replies the old lawyer, it would need that they should, not only be heretics but proved to be so, and, on the Messenger's system, this could never be done. The Messenger admits the force of the argument, but adds that in Bilney's case there were two men, whom he himself would have believed against any twenty on the other side, ready to witness in favour of the accused.

More observes that their minds are not greatly divided,

¹ Engl. Works, p. 212.

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for that he too would believe some two people against twenty others. In Bilney's case, however, the two witnesses mentioned did not go far enough to clear him. All that they had sworn to was that Bilney had preached no heresy in the particular place where they heard him. Against this there was the confirmatory evidence of twenty witnesses as well as of some of Bilney's own letters which had been filed amongst the records of the Court that tried him. The man, too, though this was not put in evidence against him, was an old offender, had been brought before Wolsey and by Wolsey dismissed "very benignly" on swearing that he would advance no more unorthodoxies. And—to conclude against him—he was, to More's private knowledge, indicated as their teacher, not only by an itinerant preacher who, with a new alias for every diocese that he entered, was caught spreading heresy through the land, but actually by one of Bilney's own two sponsors, supposed by the Messenger to be above suspicion, but proved on fuller investigation to possess a perfect library of Lutheran works and a heretical sermon composed with Bilney's aid. All this taken together would have justified the Court in inflicting a severer punishment upon Bilney than an abjuration in a quite unusually mild form and the carrying of a couple of cold faggots. For the heresy, in More's view, was as well attested as could reasonably be expected. Almost all evidence can, as he recognises, be challenged by imagining the most improbable occurrences. The evidence of a horse's hoof—to take the instance he gives—may be disputed by supposing that men with horse-shoes on their hands impressed the ground with the intention of producing the effect of it. But, not what is most improbable, but what is more than probable must be assumed. Bilney in not being required to confess any fault, but only to abjure a heresy, had in fact the full benefit of any doubt attaching to the evidence against him—more benefit, perhaps, than was really right and less than was penitentially required.

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The Messenger is not unmoved by this defence of the conviction and glides off into a side-issue. What has More to say, he wants to know, on the following case of conscience? Is it lawful for a man to seek to save his own good name by lying? More has no doubt that one "may never lawfully be forsworn." Nevertheless a man, he holds, is not bound to make true answer if he is questioned by the judge outside the province of his oath. A priest is only sworn as regards what he knows outside confession and, if any attempt were made by some tyrant to make him swear expressly to make answer regarding what passed in the confessional, he must refuse to be sworn. In like manner a layman cannot be held bound by the tendering to him of an oath to reveal some crime that the Judge has never heard of, yet must he answer truly regarding a matter into which inquiry is authorised, and never, on pain of damnation, seek to cover up any fault of his own by lying, confession being salutary and the blushes of shame modifying the fires of purgatory.

With that the discussion moves away from Bilney's cold faggot to the incineration of Tyndale's New Testament—a book, so More makes the Messenger declare, "translated . . . as men say right well, which maketh men much marvel of the burning."

"It is to me," More retorts, "great marvel that any good Christian man, having any drop of wit in his head would anything marvel or complain of the burning of that book if he know the matter."¹ For to know the matter was in his eyes to know that the book contained a thousand errors in translation. Let Tyndale's rendering of only three words be put in evidence and all the force of his unorthodoxy would be seen. For "priest" is substituted "senior," and there with a priest becomes no more the minister of the Mass and of Absolution, but what the Lutherans take him for—a preacher.

¹ Bk. III, c. 8 (Engl. Works, p. 220).

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For "charity," again, is substituted "love"; and a heavenly emotion thus reduced to the level of an earthly one. And the word "Church" is in Tyndale's Testament displaced by "congregation," so that the distinctive quality in the Christian idea of community disappears behind the thought of a company of man's making. In each case, as also in the change of "penance" into "repentance" and of a "contrite" into a "troubled" heart, the significance of the language, as it had been understood for fifteen centuries, had been lost, and a "pestilent" heresy been presented in the guise of a plain translation. How fair his accusation was appeared, More maintained, in the statement in a contemporary German Protestant work that Tyndale's book had been burnt because it destroyed the Mass.

Still, urges the Messenger, let Tyndale's translation be as bad as More had said, and the main charge against the English clergy would hold all the same, for they damned, not only Tyndale's version, but all versions in the vernacular. England stood alone in Christendom in having a local constitution forbidding on pain of heresy the possession of the Scriptures in the mother-tongue. "If our souls be in good health, the clergy take away our food," he adds bitterly, "if our souls be sick they take away the medicine."¹

More, as the reader is already aware, took a more favourable view than the Messenger of the English clergy, and not least of the parish priests, whom, for all the examples that could be alleged of "very lewd" and bad men among them, he still considered to be a match in corporate virtue and learning for any other clergy in Christendom. The low opinion entertained of them rested, in his view, to a large extent upon the habit of judging them by a higher standard than other men and making a note of their shortcomings rather than of their excellences. If a friar were caught committing adultery,

¹ Engl. Works, p. 224.

the affair was made a matter of jest and an occasion of railing, but that proved no obstacle to layfolk who had a mind to do the like. There was little reason to laugh at such lewdness. As More had heard Colet say, the laity were ever a degree below the clergy in morals; for the latter were the salt of the earth and, if the salt lost savour, the word of God grew unpalatable. Yet, a man's capacity to perform priestly functions was unaffected by his morals, and, for all God's displeasure with him as a man, he could still as a priest offer the Holy Sacrifice. Not that on this account, the bishops would not do better to restrict the number of ordinations! There was a time when in a monastery of five hundred monks there might be no more than four priests; and then was the priesthood held in great honour and the diaconate likewise. But now every rascal ran to offer himself for the office reckoning it almost a favour to God. "Were I Pope . . ." More bursts out, but before he can finish the sentence the Messenger bursts in with, "By my soul, I would ye were, and my lady your wife Popess too." "Then should she devise for nuns," comments More, doubtless with his customary impassive expression. As for his own papal reforms, however, he would be content to enforce the canons and suppress the domestic chaplains, who, employed as grooms and falconers, danced attendance on the ladies of the house. For strictly every priest to get ordained should be able to show that he had a means of livelihood—his own patrimony or a living—but in practice this wise arrangement was systematically evaded.

How would it be, the Messenger inquires, if in place of depending upon such society, male and female, as was to be met with in laymen's houses, priests were to have wives of their own to consort with? For such rank Lutheranism as this More, outraged as always by Luther's nuptials with Katharine von Bora, was not at all prepared; and in imagination he joins issue with Tyndale over the famous Pauline instruc-

tion that a bishop should be the husband of one wife. It means, he maintains, as has always been supposed, that a priest should be married once only, and not that he should be always married. Chastity—and here his observations deserve the attention of those who see his age as a quagmire of sensuality—is not so rare a gift as Tyndale fancies. Many men have lived, More says, and do live in chastity.¹

Nevertheless, persists the Messenger, priests have wives in Wales and Germany and in the Greek communion, and had them too in old time when men were reputed better than now. As to Wales, More replies, the Messenger is mistaken, though incontinence there is common; while in Germany a married clergy is only to be found in Luther's sphere of influence. Amongst the Greeks the priesthood might, it is true, be already married at their ordination, but must not marry after it. And among the ancients the marriage of the clergy was not so common as is perhaps supposed. Few were married at all, and practically none after receiving ordination, whilst others lived ascetically within the estate of matrimony. For the rest, to say that the Church binds to chastity is to misrepresent the position. She binds no man to chastity, but only chooses her priests from among those who elect to live chaste. And More repeats his conviction that if men would only think the worst of themselves and the best of their neighbours, the world would go from bad to better.

So much, then, for the clergy! What of the Bible? What in particular of that so-much-discussed constitution forbidding translations of Scripture into the vernacular? What indeed? For, as More informs the Messenger, no such constitution exists. The Provincial Council of Oxford of 1407 had, as we have seen, legislated, not against vernacular translations of the Bible, but against unauthorised ones. From that date the approval of a diocesan or of the province had to be procured

¹ Engl. Works, p. 231.

before any version of the Scripture might be read or circulated in book, tract or treatise. Old translations made prior to Wycliffe's time were not, however, forbidden, nor was Wycliffe's translation condemned because it was his, but because it was incorrect. And then there follows the witness, already mentioned, to the existence of "bibles fair and old, written in English" approved by the bishop of the diocese and left in layman's hands; and, arising out of this a discussion of the case, already reviewed,¹ of Richard Hunne, who, there was every reason to suppose, had been possessed of a Wycliffe's Bible.²

At the end of all this, however, More makes the Messenger say in effect that it is all very fine but yet nevertheless, as women put it, "somewhat it was alway that the cat winked when her eye was out."³ There was a demand for bibles so far in excess of the supply as to be significant. More does not contest this fact; nor does he pretend to be ready with an answer, much as he has heard the matter discussed. That no "good virtuous man" should have come forward to translate the Bible faithfully and no single bishop have yet approved such a translation plainly strikes him as astonishing, though some explanation might, he thought, perhaps be sought in the idea entertained by the clergy that the seditious would derive more harm than the virtuous good from reading the Scripture—a view which he makes it clear that he by no means shares. Abuse of anything is no argument for stopping the use of it. Scripture-reading is, however, no child's play and, if Plato was right in forbidding the ill-qualified or the inadequate to busy themselves with the discussion of temporal legislation, how much more should this care apply to biblical exposition! Let Scripture become matter of common talk amongst common people and then, "when the wine is in and the wit out," it will be handled as

¹ In chapter VI.

² Engl. Works, pp. 234-240.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

foolishly and blasphemously and homely as a song of Robin Hood. Not in debate but in devout consideration was the truth of the Bible to be apprehended! But against its being rendered into the English tongue there was no more objection than against its being turned from Greek into Latin. Only the bishop or ordinary of each diocese must use discretion in the dissemination of the sacred text, distributing it piecemeal according to the necessity and capacity of the recipients, the Synoptic Gospels and the Apostolic Acts to one, the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse to another; and thus "without great peril and not without great profit" the Scriptures might be spread abroad in the vulgar tongue.

The plan at the distance of four centuries serves only to make us realise how small was still the educated public of that time and how small a way as yet had the magic of the printed word advanced. What, the Messenger is made to ask, should be the price of the bibles distributed? And More makes himself reply that this is a thing of small moment, for that it would be no great matter for the bishop to give them all free of charge. That, More continues, might cost him some ten pounds, perhaps, or twenty marks—a sum that no bishop should grudge where so much spiritual profit is to be had. It is a charming touch, with something in it of a Christianity still so primitive as to have the air of a pastoral.

With such conclusions, then, the two disputants again move off to dinner and, not until they are re-settled in the arbour, is the dialogue resumed. It took this time a wider sweep. Luther, began the Messenger, is not fairly read. The very best writers might be unjustly blamed if their ideas received so little consideration as his, and, anyhow, people wanted to see for themselves what he had got to say.

That would be well enough, argues More, if the truth of Church doctrine were really in doubt. But what title has

this "fond friar," this "apostate," this "open incestuous lecher," this "plain limb of the devil," this "manifest messenger of hell" to be listened to as if he were an angel from heaven?¹ This was to call him by "odious names," but, not only were they no worse than those he used himself, but without their application people might forget what manner of man it was who was setting himself up against the pieties of so many centuries and the witness of so many saints. It was not his attacks upon the clergy that had caused his books to be banned, for such attacks were not altogether resented by reformers of the better sort; it was rather the heresies that his books contained. For he rejected the papal authority, four of the seven sacraments and even in regard to Penance, which he allowed, he taught that it needed no priest to hear a confession, nor any contrition or satisfaction, but that any man, or woman either, sufficed for the purpose.

The Messenger here breaks in rather wantonly to say that on such terms—with a woman, that is, for his confessor—he would be ready enough to be confessed weekly. But More, whilst admitting that the Messenger would probably tell another tale to a fair woman than to a foul friar, replies caustically that there would also be tales told to friars that men would not care to tell to fair women. Tyndale, he takes occasion to observe, had denied the secrecy of the confessional by accusing curates of betraying their richer parishioners to the bishops for profit. Here was "a very foolish falsehood," refuted by the open adultery both of rich and poor, and running clean counter to all the evidence. The astonishing fidelity with which priests, otherwise "light and loose of tongue," maintained the seal of this sacrament unbroken was to his eye no small evidence of its being acceptable to God; whilst, had it been unacceptable, some good men might well have been expected to point this out in the course of so many centuries. But

¹ Engl. Works, p. 247.

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what would come of it, if a young man might take a young woman for his confessor, who could say? Here was "a merry mad invention" of Luther's to bring sacramental penance to destruction. Baptism had fared little better at his hands, putting as he did all virtue in faith, depriving man of free will, so that Judas's treachery appeared as truly God's work as Christ's passion, holding men to be sinful even in respect of their good works, and causing faith to "sup up" sins however great they may be. In Matrimony Luther—and Tyndale likewise—had seen no sacrament and had incidentally taught that, if a man were found incapable in matrimonial relationship, another might do his duty for him. As for Holy Order, Luther held it for a vain invention, and accorded to man and woman and child the right to consecrate at the Holy Eucharist. For here in his view was no sacrifice, but only the commingling of Christ's Body and Blood with bread and wine, an opinion upon which his scholars Zwingli and Œcolampadius have advanced to the point of denying any real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament altogether. And Luther goes thus far with them that he would have men pay It no worship nor honour, take It after supper as readily as before breakfast, handle It as they list, receive It only on their death-beds.

"In faith," says the Messenger, somewhat overwhelmed, "these things be far out of course."

More goes on to point out that Luther had entertained even wilder heresies. For Luther taught, against all Scripture and all reason, that no Christian man is or can be bound by any law made among men; that there is no such thing as purgatory; that all men's souls lie in sleep till the day of doom; and that no one should pray to saints or go on pilgrimage or reverence relic or image. And with that More enters into a learned argument as to the precise meaning of the Greek word "latría" and the usage of the Latin word

"adorare," and the nature and extent of their reservation to the worship of God alone. The Messenger is represented as being more and more impressed as Luther's profanities and improprieties are exposed, until at length he confesses the substance of them to be beyond discussion abominable, and the rehearsal of them sufficient to make him odious to all right-minded people. More follows up this admission of the Messenger's by sketching in a character of Luther which, whether or not its likeness be allowed, shows plainly enough how the new evangelist appeared to the most judicious mind in England at this date. Tyndale subsequently dismissed it as a piece of poetry,¹ but prose statements of the kind are not in themselves proof that poetic vision is deceived; and Tyndale offers nothing in its place. There are, besides, some sufficiently hard Teutonic facts in More's portrait of Luther—such facts as Luther's description of himself as "this holy devout man," this "most benign father," and of his qualities, real or supposititious, under the style of "Dr. Martin's humanity and bounty." Small wonder, perhaps, that More took the man for a "vainglorious fool"! Luther's self-confidence, inconsistency, rejection of reason, reliance on faith or more accurately fideism, and recommendation of licence under the name of liberty would, in fact, have exasperated many a friendly critic, had he had to suffer the German apostle as a contemporary influence. To have called the Germans mad and bad is anyhow no monopoly of the sixteenth century. So surely does history repeat itself, that More has much to say about the atrocities committed by the German troops—composed, according to his information, for the most part of Lutherans—who, under Bourbon's command, were responsible in 1527 for the capture and sack of Rome. He gives details, too disgusting for repetition, of their cruelties—cruelties so refined as well as disgusting that, he affirms, they might have served

¹ "Answer to Sir Thomas More's 'Dialogue,'" Bk. IV, c. 4.

to provide the Devil with new torments in hell. The Messenger, however, suggests, as the recording pen of history gives only too much justification for suggesting, that the crimes committed by belligerents are the property of no one sect, but of all warfare. But More will not have it. The horrors, he maintains, had been exceptional; and the sacrilege, whilst well in tune with Lutheran teaching against the Blessed Sacrament, had been previously unheard of amongst Christian men. Arians, Pelagians, Manichees had all known better and lived better than the Lutherans; and the world he supposed, as men have tended to comfort themselves by supposing in all desperate ages, must be drawing to a close for so great an increase of evil to occur. It all came, he argues, of Luther's theory of predestination, which threw the responsibility for everything upon God, and made men feel they could do as they pleased for anything that it mattered.

The Messenger can only say in reply that Luther's words do not mean what they say, and that Luther's opinions had among Englishmen found honest and reputable support. More, however, believed all Luther's following to be tarred with the same brush as their master, and cites in evidence the examination of a learned English Lutheran that he had attended. It had seemed to him on that occasion to be clear enough, once one got to the bottom of the man's mind, that the doctrine of faith without works had its full predestinarianist connotations. Had it meant no more to him than that the self-depreciation of the publican was commended and the self-esteem of the pharisee condemned, there need have been no religious commotion whatever, for these were common-places of Catholic teaching. But in fact, in the last analysis, the Lutheran view signified justification by faith without charity; and to this the Church would never consent. Without the works of love all the energy of faith, as St. Paul and St. James had shown, would be in vain; and, if works were of

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no account, then love had no true place in the Lutheran theory of salvation. As More saw things, the Lutheran standpoint was twice as inimical to the true theory of grace as the Pelagian, for, where Pelagius and his following said we might do good sometimes without grace, Luther and his like declared we could at no time do good with it. There was, indeed, no saying of Luther so foolish and frantic as his assertion that God had need of our faith, but not of our works. He needed neither, but we stood in need of both, little worth as they were, if, according to His scheme of salvation, we were to be saved.

So More reasoned, resting his opinion to some extent upon his personal recollection of the trial for heresy of one Dr. Ferman, the Rector of All Hallows in Honey Lane, a learned and scholarly man well versed in all the lore of the Lutherans. "It may well be," he concludes, in summarising what passed on that to him illuminating occasion, and as if to make scrupulously sure that his reader should know the precise value to place upon his statements, "that my remembrance may partly miss the order, partly peradventure add or minish in some part of the matter, yet in this point I assure you faithfully there is no manner, change or variance from his [Dr. Ferman's] opinion, but that after many shifts he brought it plainly to this point at last, that he and his fellows that were of Luther's sect were firmly of this opinion that they believed that God worketh all in every man, good works and bad."¹

Destiny, on these assumptions, would become lord of all and cover every man's sins so completely that law might appear no better than injustice. And More relates, doubtless with glee, the tale of the Lutheran robber who, pleading before a German court that he had been predestined to steal, was answered by his judges that they were predestined to hang

¹ Engl. Works, p. 271.

him. The fact, however, remained, whatever its humours, that the world lay in peril of being turned upside down by doctrines subversive of moral responsibility—doctrines that in effect cloaked licence with the name of liberty. "Many merry pastimes," as More phrases it, did men hope to see come of them, yet, as he adds, they would find themselves sore deceived. And, maintaining that it was the business of wise princes to save their people from the evil communications that corrupt good manners, he enters upon a defence of persecution, not as a religious duty—far from it—but as a secular necessity. About this, however, a word or two will be better said a little further forward and in another connection. For the true envoi of the dialogue is not to be found in any inquiry into this vexed question, but in the deeper considerations which follow regarding the presence of some element of pride in all unorthodox thinking, of some disposition illicit and unnatural in that "choosing for oneself"¹ which is what the word heresy in its purest essence signifies. We can take the point of the implied criticism better, perhaps, through the words of the old English mystic whom More read than through any expression that More himself gave to it. Here is the heart of the matter as it appeared to Walter Hilton—" . . . As St. Gregory saith, 'He that cannot perfectly despise himself, he found never yet the meek wisdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ.' . . . Heretics feel not this meekness."² Doubtless, had More had in mind that type of men of whom Henry Sidgwick³ in the late nineteenth century might perhaps stand for an example—men too intellectually ascetic to be satisfied by the common sense of Humanism—he

¹ αἰρεῖσθαι.

² "Scale of Perfection," Bk. I, cc. xix and xx. Cp. Bk. II, c. 26.

³ As an illustration of what I mean I might suggest a comparison of Prof. Sidgwick's religious standpoint with that of his brother-in-law, Lord Balfour. The one is that of an epistemological, though not an ethical ascetic, the other that of a natural, though not a classical humanist.

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would never have offered pride as an explanation. He was dealing, however, not with honest doubt, nor even with denial, but with a positive, sometimes arrogant assertion for which, as the "Dialogue" shows, he felt the intellectual foundations to be wanting. What irritated him in Tyndale was that, as he saw him, a nature reasonable and honest and to all appearances at the start holy and high-minded, had subsequently become so swollen with "pride and malice" that, even more than Luther, Tyndale had come to undervalue the sacraments in general and to reject the humblest sacrament of them all altogether. It is of heretics as a type, but with Tyndale foremost in his thoughts, that More observes, "They nothing ponder what is reasonably spoken to them, but whereto their fond affection inclineth, that thing they lean to and that they believe, or at the leastwise that way they walk and say they believe it."¹

But what, it may be asked, had Tyndale to say in answer to this volume of denunciation: let him in fairness be heard in his own defence. And as regards this, since Tyndale has replied to his assailant chapter by chapter and almost line by line, there is no other difficulty than that the reader's patience might give out, his attention fail, and he himself, like Eutychus at the preaching of a greater than Tyndale or More, fall fast asleep. The most, then, that can be ventured here is to indicate Tyndale's broad line of argument and particular treatment of the two outstanding issues. He accuses More repeatedly of being a poet, and dismisses him in general on this account. Poet the Lord Chancellor may have been, and perhaps none the worse for it; but, when we turn to Tyndale's treatment of his own case we may find it, not indeed rich with high imagination, yet not utterly wanting in flights of fancy. In dealing, for example, with More's hard historical question whether the Church or the Bible came first in time, he avoids

¹ Engl. Works, p. 287.

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the obvious truth, that the Church collected and authenticated the New Testament, by what is no better than a pretty but quite irrelevant conceit. We men, he urges, are begotten by the Word of God, and therefore is the Gospel older than, as he prefers to call it, the Congregation. After this the reader will not be astonished to hear that, when it comes to dealing with the rational grounds of faith, Tyndale falls back upon mere feeling. For faith, he maintains, is of two kinds. There is "historical faith" and there is "feeling faith"; and it is upon the latter that he relies to teach him truth. "And this faith," he goes on, "is none opinion, but a sure feeling, and therefore ever fruitful." We may some of us wonder why it should be so sure. And the only possible reply seems to be that Tyndale has identified his own feelings with the rule of faith—an attitude certainly not exempt from some suspicion of that pride which More had seemed to himself to detect in the Reformer's whole attitude.

As for the much-debated question of justification by faith only, there is little in Tyndale's exposition that can be called illuminating. He denies the truth of More's account of the examination of Dr. Ferman, though, as More was present at it and he was not, the denial is neither particularly convincing nor particularly courteous. He contends that true faith invariably issues in good works, which is a convenient rather than a demonstrable supposition. And he claims that whilst faith, in despite of St. Paul's familiar observations on the subject,¹ cannot exist without love, it can and does sometimes exist without itself—a faith that is no faith. Yet St. Paul was speaking of a faith that could remove mountains when he distinguished it from charity.

There, perhaps, we may do wisely to leave this great wrangle of words and ideas. For, though More fought his battles over again in a "Confutation of Tyndale's Answer," he had already

¹ I Cor. xiii.

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said all that really needed saying and in his new effort to prevail, the dialogue-form is abandoned, and the argument grows proportionately longer and more laboured.

There was, in point of fact, the less hope of the combatants coming to an agreement, that their temperaments as well as their opinions were opposed. A man of the world and of the widest culture, accustomed, though not in this instance content, to take men and institutions as he finds them and to work them to the best advantage, will never feel himself at his ease in the company of an opinionated and revolutionary clergyman, however sincere the latter may be in his convictions and however bold to testify to the faith that is in him. Fighting as they were over the treacherous field where manners tend to move opinions, each protagonist in the rising conflict saw the other as more than half a knave, as condoning in the one case the loose luxury of the Roman Curia, in the other the coarse nuptials and broken vows of the German ex-conventuals. Yet were they both Englishmen against whom no charge of this kind lies and in better times might have been better friends. As it was they stand out as the prime movers of that great debate which divides our country even to this day, which still enters our homes and still distresses our affections. From their engagement sprang the English civil war, from their loins the Cavalier and the Puritan. More in his controversy with Tyndale was, we may do well to remember, the accredited champion of an English hierarchy whose descent from St. Augustine is still common ground in the ecclesiastical dispute between Catholic and Anglican. And, as also sometimes we need to remind ourselves amidst the mass of petty disputations, the central issue between the reforming Humanists and the philistine Reformers was whether, to borrow the words of Egidio Canisio, men should be changed by religion or religion by men.¹

¹ Quoted by Pastor, "History of the Popes," VII, p. 10.

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THE downfall of Wolsey was no sudden dismissal on a single count. As Prof. Pollard points out,¹ he had been losing ground for at least a year before his failure in 1529 to procure a dissolution of the King's marriage caused him to crash headlong and make way for a man who was in almost every respect his mental and moral antithesis. Of this gradual fall from favour, however, no study nor even sketch is here required. Only, perhaps, at the final scene at Blackfriars shall we do well to glance, since there if anywhere did the old order give way to a new one and the ancient fabric of English society lapse into dissolution.

It is said that when Queen Victoria, short as she was and plain of face, appeared in Paris beside the Empress Eugénie, all radiant with youth and beauty, there was still no difficulty in recognising which was the princess born and which the *parvenue*. So would it have seemed, had Henry's second queen been seated in the hall at Blackfriars beside the first. For Katharine rose instinctively to the height of her occasion, and both as a woman and a princess showed herself a daughter of Castile. Protesting at once against the competence of a local tribunal to hear her case, she appealed to the Pope, and then, when three days later her husband of twenty years' standing entered to learn the Court's decision, knelt at his feet, imploring him to remember both his honour and hers and that, too, of their daughter. Her dignity and devotion overcame for a moment his ruthless and stubborn will; and

¹ "Henry VIII" (Goupil edition), pp. 168-173.

upon her departure from the Court he spoke of her before the assembled company as a wife "as true and obedient" as he could in his fantasy desire, and possessed as a woman of all the virtues that her station or any other demanded. She had shown herself, indeed, a very great lady.

It was Katharine's misfortune, however, not to be dealing with gentlemen. Though Bayard, the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, was but lately dead, neither of the Englishmen nor yet the Medici Prince with whom she had to do as Pope behaved as chivalry requires the strong to behave to the weak and men towards women. The King, whether, as Froude maintains, he "saw his duty through his wishes" or, as others have thought, pursued his own ends under cover of his country's welfare, had come to the conclusion that it was desirable to exchange his ageing wife for some woman capable of child-bearing and, as Wolsey to his chagrin had tardily found out, for a particular woman of no particular diplomatic value. Doubtless we may be too hard on Henry, now that his axe is rusted and his executioner dust. For many men, after all, have held their marriage vows more lightly, and would hold them lighter still, if the doctrine that matrimony is in its essence conterminous with sentiment were ever to become a general conviction. Henry, after all, was but a pioneer in the art, now brought to such high perfection, of changing old wives for new on the most enlightened pretences. He was, or perhaps rather seemed to himself to be, always in good faith; "his egotism," as Prof. Pollard observes,¹ "touching the sublime" and enabling him without trouble to convince himself of his righteousness. To take Holy Communion daily or admonish his sister, Margaret, for loose living, whilst writing all the while love letters to one who was not even on his own assumptions as yet his lawful wife, presented no obstacles to a conscience under such perfect control that it could without the least embarrassment call evil good and good evil.

¹ "Henry VIII" (Goupil edition), p. 149.

Wolsey, who might have given his master spiritual counsel, gave him instead immoral countenance. Partly to keep in Henry's good graces and partly for the sake of a diplomatic card, the Cardinal lent his aid to a scheme which he came later to have reason both to hate and fear. Katharine, sacrificed by the King to his paramour, was sacrificed by the Cardinal to his diplomacy. In strange innocence of Anne's projects, he planned a French marriage for his master. For the sack of the Eternal City by the Imperial troops in 1527 and the consequent captivity of the Pope, had agitated anew the scales of a policy poised upon Rome; and once again the Cardinal strove to throw the weight of England into the balance against Spain. Thus it seemed for a moment as if Henry's growing estrangement from Katharine might work in admirably with Wolsey's pro-Papal plans. Committed to the King's general design without comprehending the King's private intention, the Minister had therefore despatched to Rome Stephen Gardiner, the subtlest canonist in his employ, to bring all the pressure possible to bear upon the Pope so as to free Henry for a new matrimonial alliance.

And what of Clement VII, the final arbiter in Katharine's cause, the first trustee of Christian morals, the dark horse outlined against the horizon of the scene? Long has he waited for a champion in his conduct of the Queen's matter, and only the other day found one in Judge Crabitès, a lawyer who, if there should chance to be any advocates of giving a pope a new trial may now be heard on his behalf.¹ Circumspect, indeed, Clement seems as we take a second glance at him; yet on a longer look his features appear stamped with a fatal hesitation that made him temporise where a better man would have found his pathway clear! Political considerations weighed with him where judicial ones alone were in place; and legal subtleties gained him time when moral sense should have prompted him to swift decision. He

¹ Crabitès, "Clement VII and Henry VIII."

pondered Henry's desire for a son; if Casale can be trusted, he toyed with Henry's monstrous project of bigamy; whilst there was a chance that a French army might still rescue him from the Emperor's clutches, he manœuvred shamelessly for delay; and, when at length he did send Cardinal Campeggio to England with a commission to try the case and plenary powers to settle it, he attached to a secret decretal, the effect of which was to enable the legates to decide in Henry's sense against the dispensation, the embarrassing condition that it was to be shown to none except the King and Wolsey.

The King's case as stated at Blackfriars did not raise the question of the Pope's prerogative to dispense with the provisions of the Levitical law. The force of Henry's plea depended upon the supposition that Pope Julius II, in dispensing with the objection of affinity, had supposed himself to be dealing only with a non-consummated marriage between Prince Arthur and Katharine. Such a marriage and no more the Queen on oath maintained it to have been, but her evidence might not have been held conclusive nor Henry's cause have failed, if at the critical juncture a Brief granted before the Bull and disproving the King's contention that Julius was only envisaging a marriage unconsummated had not been found in Spain. Not unnaturally the King, and his envoys and apologists after him, took the view that this Brief was a forgery; but the original has now been found at Vienna,¹ and its authenticity appears assured. No reason remains, therefore, for supposing that according to the law at that time obtaining Henry and Katharine were other than man and wife indissolubly united until death should part them. And of that opinion was Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, a man both morally great and intellectually considerable, and said so himself at the trial in, from the King's standpoint, a most unseasonable interruption.

¹ See on this Constant, "The Reformation in England," p. 65 (footnote).

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The immediate effect of the finding of the Brief was to shatter the proceedings at Blackfriars. The Pope considered that with its discovery he had regained his freedom to revoke the case to Rome, and accordingly did so, leaving the two Cardinal-legates very much in the lurch. Campeggio, in form—as Judge Crabitès points out—as well as in fact the real head of the tribunal, had other places to retire to than his neglected diocese of Salisbury, but of all his cherished splendours little if anything was left to Wolsey except the archdiocese of York. Thither in due course he retired, and on his way thence back to London a year later, as all the world knows, he died. So had the glory of this world passed, leaving its once eminent possessor no better than a purple patch upon a page of history!

To Wolsey's political power, both ecclesiastical and civil, Thomas Cromwell in course of time succeeded, but to Wolsey's great legal office there was at once appointed Sir Thomas More. The two rising Ministers were as different in make and morals as any two men could be; yet, even so, Master Secretary Cromwell had one outstanding feature in common with Lord Chancellor More. Both had come early in contact with transalpine influences. Both, as lovers of fine art and good conversation, had appreciated the brilliance and subtlety of the Italian mind. Both had been students, but in two widely different schools, of the tradition of Florence. If More was the pupil of Pico and through Pico of Savonarola, Cromwell was as certainly the pupil of Machiavelli. This, as is well known, is no mere matter of inference or conjecture.¹ It was in Wolsey's palace that Reginald Pole had once discussed with Cromwell the ideal character for a king's servant; and it was in the course of that conversation that Cromwell had

¹ Merriman ("Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell," I, p. 87, footnote) gives sufficient reasons against the attempt which Dixon in his "History of the Church of England" (I, p. 41) makes to discredit Pole's story. See Pole's "Apologia ad Carolum Quintum," par. xxviii, for the story.

recommended as the last word in political wisdom a little work, not yet in print, containing a more subtle version of what, under German guidance, men have come to denominate "real politik." It was called "The Prince" and composed by Machiavelli. The genius of the politician as there depicted consists, as everyone knows, in penetrating and pleasing the mind of the monarch with a ruthless disregard of moral considerations, yet with the best possible care for moral appearances. To look through the pages of "The Prince" is, then, to look into the mirror where Cromwell once trimmed his soul to Italian fashions and against the translucent surface of which were once reflected the pale forms of rulers showing, by action or defect, the significance of the principles suggested. Here were condemned Scipio's mild methods and Savonarola's neglect of armed force, and here commended Hannibal's inhumanity and Cæsar Borgia's cunning. With Machiavelli all too clearly force and fraud were the true cardinal virtues, yet, as the crafty Italian points out, needing to be used discreetly. For, as he says, "it is honourable to seem mild and merciful and courteous and religious and sincere, and indeed to be so, provided your mind be so rectified and prepared that you can act quite contrary on occasion. And this must be premised that a prince . . . cannot observe all those things exactly which make men be esteemed virtuous, being oftentimes obliged for the preservation of his state to do things inhuman, uncharitable and irreligious."¹ Yet, even so, appearances can with care be kept up. "Princes," continues the serpent's whispering tongue ". . . leave things of injustice and envy to the ministry and execution of others, but acts of favour and grace . . . to be performed by themselves."²

Such views, such maxims, were well calculated to appeal to the intelligence of Thomas Cromwell, whose outstanding quality, as his best biographer points out,³ was "a strict

¹ C. xviii.

² C. xix.

³ Merriman, "Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell," I, p. 86.

attention to business," business being, of course, assumed to mean the business of this world only. It was so much more to the point that he had assimilated Machiavelli's advice to a secretary of state to lay aside all thought of himself and consider nothing but what is for the profit of his master; for the necessary complement of such a Prince as Machiavelli proposed is an *âme damnée*, in the fullest sense of that term, of a Minister.

It would be difficult to imagine a conjunction of personalities more happily contrived to illustrate the practical working of Machiavelli's treatise than that of Henry VIII and Cromwell, or to determine which of them more perfectly complied with the requirements of his part. All that they did was done in the name of virtue, and all the credit of it was put to the score of the King, whilst to the Minister was reserved the execution of the ruthless work, as well as to be himself executed when it was over. The profound sagacity of Machiavelli's system was thus clearly shown; for the children of this world are in their generation, though in their generation only, wiser than the children of light.

More did not live to see concluded a collaboration between Prince and Prime Minister which, more perhaps than any other policy this country has known, changed in a single decade the face of England. A story, however, has come down to us through Roper which shows that from the first he watched it working with his usual keen intelligence. It was in 1532, when Cromwell first began to emerge from the obscurity in which Henry, for a year or so after his services were first accepted, had let him lie, that More, then newly retired from the Chancellorship, tendered, with the due forms of loyalty, a prescient warning to the rapacious cynic: "Master Cromwell, you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise and liberal prince; if you will follow my poor advice, you shall in your counsel-giving unto His Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do, but never what he is able to

do. . . . For if the lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him." Harder still, it must be added, if the lion, still unconscious of his leonine might, were already far advanced in vulpine cunning! For thus, in fact, it was. "Three may keep counsel," Henry had told George Cavendish in 1530, "if two be away; and, if I thought that my cap knew my counsel, I would cast it into the fire and burn it."¹

To this cunning in Henry, More, if the truth be told, in some measure owed his promotion. For, if Cromwell was invaluable to his master as an *âme damnée*, More was in a position to serve the King with a soul already in the public eye no little blessed. As the breach with Rome widened, Henry had obviously much to gain by entrusting the Great Seal to one who, if not without his critics,² was so generally esteemed as Sir Thomas More. Every man, the King had so far found, could be had at a price; and, though he had argued with More in vain—it was in the gallery at Hampton Court on a certain day in the late summer of 1527—that the eternal law of God, not the ecclesiastical and therefore dispensable rule of the Church, was outraged by his marriage with Katharine, he probably calculated that the greatest prize a layman could hope for would not be lightly relinquished. He was mistaken. As More's mind was proof against all that Foxe and Stokesley were able to urge on the King's behalf in favour of repudiating the Queen, so did his character protect him against all that the King had to offer in pomp and circumstance. Yet from Henry's standpoint the bribe was certainly worth tendering. Had the King only been able to draw to his side the most distinguished layman of his time, his hands would have been immeasurably strengthened in doing the things that he now intended.

¹ Cavendish, "Life of Wolsey."

² "Of notable virtue, though not so of everyone considered." (Roper's "Life," with especial reference to this time.)

Why, however, men have naturally inquired, with the King's purposes so plain, did More allow himself to be made Lord Chancellor and place himself in so compromising a situation? The answer is all it could be. He did refuse. But the King would take no refusal, grew angry and forced one, who was both his subject and a public servant, into the splendid, perilous position.¹ It is possible, as Prof. Chambers suggests, that More was moved by a further consideration. Perhaps he thought that in doing his duty by the King he might also render some service to the Queen and somehow make her hard lot better. There was this to encourage him. Once the great office had been accepted, Henry hid his craft behind a mask of charm. When at some new mention of the King's matter the Lord Chancellor, pleading a case of conscience, fell upon his knees, he was graciously told that his scruples should be respected and the business entrusted to other hands than his. Nothing in appearance could have seemed kinder; yet nothing in reality better exemplified the vulpine trait in Henry's character, moving as he did always stealthily to his end and turning suddenly into fox whenever his *fausse bonhomie* failed him.

So, then, More became Lord Chancellor with the approval of Wolsey, who thought him the only man in England equal to the post, of Norfolk, who saw in him a means of keeping Suffolk out of it, and of the country in general, which was well content to see the appointment of so good a man and of so loyal a supporter of the dishonoured Queen. He was installed with all the usual ceremony, receiving the Great Seal from the King's hands at Greenwich, and on the day after—it was the 26th of October, 1529—passing, as his biographer notes, in high procession up that famous hall with whose memories of the rise and fall of many in England only the immemorial Abbey at its side can compete. He who had mocked a little at

¹ Rastell, Fragment A. printed in "Harmsfield's Life of More," p. 222.

his predecessor's miscellany of maces, pole-axes and the rest, must now submit to be preceded by a crowned sceptre to signify his vice-regal power, by a book to symbolise his full knowledge of the law, and by the Great Seal embedded in a silken purse; and with such circumstance he passed on to the Star-Chamber, where his Court of Chancery was accustomed to sit. There Norfolk led him to his seat, and then, by the King's instructions, turned and spoke of him to the expectant crowd in a manner quite unusual. He praised the new Chancellor's gifts both of nature and of grace, his wit, wisdom, incorruptibility and uprightness, his skill in diplomacy, his prudence in counsel, his sincerity and his eloquence. Much, Norfolk told them, was hoped by the sovereign from More's appointment—justice and equity, righteousness and peace, glory and splendour. Ignoring the fact that one or two laymen not otherwise distinguished had in Plantagenet times held the Great Seal, he hailed More as if he were the first to break the precedent which confined the Chancellorship to prelates or magnates of the highest rank. The King, Norfolk said in so many words, had looked at More's merits and not his birth, at More's virtues and not his rank. And it was the King's wish that men should see in More's appointment a compliment to the lesser nobility and laity from among whom the new Lord Chancellor had sprung, for in that class his Majesty had discerned the presence of subjects of the highest worth. The King, in point of fact—though Norfolk did not quite say so—was contemplating the creation of a new aristocracy, and of this More's nomination was an earnest.

The subject of these compliments listened with surprise to Norfolk's speech, and was seen to be trembling with nervousness as he rose to reply. He recovered himself, however, and answered becomingly enough that Norfolk's words went far beyond his own deserts, though not beyond what his new office required of its occupant. He was grateful, he said, for the

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King's high opinion of him, to which Norfolk had given expression in such stately eloquence. Who was he to be thus favoured, conscious as he was of his unworthiness and insufficiency? He had been drawn into the service of the State against his will and had accepted his new dignity with the utmost reluctance. His shoulders were unequal to the burden of his office, yet he would bear it as bravely as he could, taking pleasure in his work and craving indulgence for his shortcomings.

Then, turning his face to the seat of judgment, More proceeded in another vein. He spoke of Wolsey's great ability, experience, and skill, of Wolsey's unhappy fall and of the inglorious end¹ of the Cardinal's career. Here was an event that carried a fearful warning of the instability of human greatness; and, in comparison with the Cardinal, he was but as a torch beside the sun. If it were not for the King's condescension and the kind welcome and good dispositions of his audience, he would feel himself no better off than Damocles with the sword hanging above him by a single thread.

Just over a week later the Lord Chancellor found himself called upon to speak again of his predecessor; and this time he stood at the King's right hand in Parliament. He was speaking therefore as Henry's mouthpiece, and making, in fact, as we should call it, the King's speech.² His language must be read in this sense. Henry did not at any time spare his

¹ Miss Routh (p. 169 footnote) regards "inglorious end" as an anachronism proving, since Wolsey was not yet dead, the unreliability of this report of More's speech. The words can, however, as easily apply to Wolsey's career as to his life. Prof. Chambers for his part is inclined to regard the speeches both of Norfolk and More as rhetorical exercises of Stapleton's. Stapleton's authorities were the recollections of some of More's household who were his fellow-exiles and the collection of letters, no longer extant, of More's secretary, John Harris; and his facts are "for the most part remarkably accurate" (Hallett, Preface). In the circumstances Prof. Chambers's conclusion would appear a little sweeping and Stapleton to deserve the benefit of any doubt.

² Chambers, "Thomas More," p. 243.

discarded Ministers; nor had he any wish at the moment to spare Wolsey. But an enumeration of the Cardinal's misdeeds was also an intimation of a change of public policy; and More, probably satisfied in conscience by his tribute of a few days before to the abilities of a man whom he had not personally cared for and whose foreign policy he disapproved, had no personal occasion to refuse to become the spokesman of a hostile and doubtless widespread criticism. The comparison that he drew between Wolsey and a scabbed sheep, though neither elegant nor pleasing, will appear less harsh if one notices that it follows close upon a portrait of the King as the good shepherd of his people. Crafty and fraudulent More calls the Cardinal; and these are ugly words, but there had to much appearance been craft and fraud enough in Wolsey's career to justify the epithets. Lord Darcy, a magnate in the north and subsequently the leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, had drawn up, even before the Cardinal fell into disfavour, an indictment of Wolsey's deeds and negligences that, as Froude rightly observes, "enables us to understand how the Chancellorship came to be accepted by Sir Thomas More."¹ The work of an Englishman, a Catholic and—in the same sense as all sensible men in every age—a reformer, Darcy's paper charges the Cardinal with "great corruptions and bribes,"² and probably reflects much floating opinion amongst moderate men of good standing. At all events the existence of the memorial relieves More's attack of any suspicion of insincerity or sycophancy. If More said what the King wanted him to say, he said only what men of his party already thought. No doubt the whole business was not, as Prof. Chambers takes occasion to point out, a particularly chivalrous proceeding. But the Tudors were not chivalrous people, and the Minister of a Tudor King had in a

¹ "Divorce of Catherine of Aragon," p. 120.

² Letters and Papers, IV, Pt. iii, p. 2554, No. 5749, July 1, 1529.

matter of generosity to consent to his master's standards. Who after all are we that we should throw stones—we who have seen Haldane, the first begetter of the British Expeditionary Force, treated by democracy as little better than a traitor? And this when the charges against the sixteenth-century Lord Chancellor were far more substantial than any that could be alleged against his twentieth-century successor.

The expectations excited by More's elevation to be head of the judicature were not disappointed. Stapleton depicts him as a sort of Christian Cato, upright, incorruptible, unambitious of fame and fortune, but with these sterner qualities tempered by a great mildness, meekness and mirth. Hall, it is true, whilst paying a lawyer's tribute to his fine wit and knowledge of the Common Law, complains that his habit of mocking was "a great blemish to his gravity," but Hall judged him perhaps by the pompous standards of Wolsey against which he had re-acted. It should not, in any case, be too hard to forgive him for making fun, since the administration of equity during his brief reign appeared more swift, serene, sensible and even as between rich and poor than it had seemed before. So much we may gather as well from the anecdotes that have come down to us through his friends as from the unsuccessful efforts of his foes, when the King's favour waned, to disprove his integrity. But, as Lord Russell of Killowen observes in his recent study, "We have . . . none of the ordinary foundations upon which to build a consideration of his judicial qualities or achievements."¹ No leading judgment of his remains to establish his name as a judge, no legal commentary to establish his fame as a jurist. He attempted in his troubled term of office no great legislation. His best efforts seem to have been devoted to expediting business after Wolsey's long delays and to smoothing

¹ In *The Clergy Review*, Special Number, May 1935 (Vol. IX, No. 5).

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down the common-law judges after Wolsey's manifold injunctions to stay execution of judgment in the interest or supposed interest of equity. He had, which the Cardinal had not, time for his work, so that, thanks no doubt to his own industry as well, the familiar doggerel said no more than the truth:

When More sometime had Chancellor been,
No more suits did remain,
The like will never more be seen
Till More be there again.

And he had too, which the Cardinal had neither, a tact and sweet reasonableness about him which prevailed over the prejudices of the Judiciary. These learned brethren of the Common Law, after More had given them dinner—and, it is to be presumed, a better dinner than he was accustomed to give himself—were invited to re-consider his injunctions, to say, if they could, what alternative course they would have taken in his place, and to undertake, if they would, the reform of the law themselves with a view to greater equity. This cunning was too keen for them, for, as he very well knew, they liked to shelter behind juries and avoid responsibility.

Upon such small beer as this must the image of More as a judge be fed. His majesty as keeper of the King's conscience and head of the Judiciary escapes us, probably not only for lack of records, but because it was rather a potential than an actual thing. We can catch the gleam in his grey eye, the echo of his accents, the flicker of the smile upon his face; but his deeper mind is hidden from us until, his dignities resigned and all the tinsel glory of his robes stripped off, he stands before us as the great constitutional lawyer of his time and a martyr for the liberty of silence. Yet let us see for a moment what we may of the Lord Chancellor as he passes on his way with a certain pleasant informality characteristic of a smaller and yet more spacious world. Mark him, for

example, when, like another Solomon, he adjudges his wife's new-bought lap-dog to a beggar-woman after setting it equidistant between the two claimants to determine to which of them it would instinctively run. Mark him again as he makes a decree against Giles Heron, his son-in-law, who, trading upon family relationship, had refused to listen to equitable suggestions for the settlement of a case. Mark him once more as he kneels to ask his father's blessing publicly in the Court of King's Bench before passing to his place in Chancery, or as he gives his parent precedence at assemblies in Lincoln's Inn. But turn again, and you will hear him say that, though it were his own father who was the other party to the case, yet should the devil himself have justice. Dog his footsteps and you may catch him somewhere slyly warning an heretical soul of the name of Silver that "silver must be tried in the fire" and then dismissing the man in high delight upon receiving the repartee, "Ay! But quick-silver will not abide it."¹ Only look close enough and you will see Puck still playing behind the very skirts of Justice as the grave Lord Chancellor prefixes to the signature of one "A. Tubbe," an attorney, the three little mocking words "a tale of" and thus, near two centuries before due time, provides a title which perhaps took lodging in Swift's attentive ear and made its way out again at the end of his pen.

The last of these vignettes witnesses to the unabated vigour of those impish dispositions in More that had put him so much in love with his monkey and his clown and given a keen point to Erasmus's play upon a name suggestive of the same Hellenic ancestry as Folly. The peculiar gaiety of the saint had always been a little his, but we may suspect with some confidence that in these years it was growing as, amidst all the anxieties of the time, the child in him moved on with carefree confidence out of the nursery of life into its eternal

¹ Strype, Memorials I, 205 (p. 316).

habitations. Doubtless people with no similar sense of proportion between things present and things to come thought him a little eccentric, and the more that his merry mischief never relaxed the vein of his austerity. His own daughter-in-law, Anne Cresacre, was one of these. Catching a glimpse of his hair-shirt as he sat at supper in summer-time without ruff or collar, she did not, or could not conceal her amusement—much, of course, to the annoyance of Lady More, who was all convention and wished her husband so equally. And the Duke of Norfolk coming to More's house to dine and finding him still at church, dressed in a surplice and singing in choir, chaffed him a little sourly, and hinted that he was demeaning himself: "God body, God body, my Lord Chancellor, a parish clerk, a parish clerk!" But More was not at a loss, and answered sweetly that the Duke must not suppose that the King could be offended with him for serving God or view his conduct as derogatory to his dignity.

Enough of such pleasant trifles, for it remains still to deal with More's much-abused attitude towards heresy. Time was when this appeared as the blot upon his 'scutcheon. Thirty years ago Prof. Pollard might be found writing that "conscience made Sir Thomas More persecute and glory in the persecution of heretics."¹ And Creighton in his "Lectures upon Persecution and Tolerance" instances More as a typical example of what he calls pseudo-liberalism² and condemns him as obscurantist and confused. Both men were writing during that golden hour of Liberalism of which our eyes have seen the sands run swiftly out—the hour when it seemed to many safe to assume that mere freedom of thought and liberty of expression were the last word in the wisdom that was to solve all political problems and resolve all religious mysteries. But in fact such anticipations show no great understanding either

¹ "Henry VIII," p. 141 (1902. Goupil edition).

² "Persecution and Tolerance," p. 107.

of the fallen nature of man or of the contingent nature of Liberal doctrine.

No damaging contrast, such as Creighton attempts to set up between the laws of Utopia as described by Hythloday and the laws of England as administered by More, can be admitted, not merely because Hythloday is not More, but because there is probably no judge upon the English Bench who does not enforce rules of law in conflict with his private convictions. Not judges alone would, however, if it were valid, fall under Creighton's type of condemnation. Peace is a humane ideal; yet not all warriors can be set down as wicked. The starvation of women and children is peculiarly hateful, yet not all blockades can be condemned utterly. And so freedom of thought may be a civic ideal; and yet not all intolerance wrong. The Utopians themselves were, as we have seen, by no means perfectly tolerant; and More might well have rebutted Creighton's charge by saying that, if he was but a pseudo-liberal, he was at any rate not a liberal doctrinaire. His standpoint did not differ in principle, though it did differ in detail, from what every statesman is compelled by force of circumstances to accept. Liberty of thought is good, but opinion subversive of the State is evil, and, if for one reason or another, prejudice or ignorance is getting so much the better of truth that the safety of the commonwealth is imperilled, freedom has to give way to order. Where the danger-point precisely lies, and when precisely it has at any time been reached, are matters admitting of no theoretical treatment.

Let us look, however, at More's position as it appears at its worst. "The author," announces the heading of the thirteenth chapter of the fourth book of the "Dialogue against Tyndale," "sheweth his opinion concerning the burning of heretics and that it is lawful, necessary and well done, and sheweth also that the clergy doth not procure it, but only

the good and politic provision of the temporality." That uncompromising sentence minimises nothing and extenuates nothing. Yet to read the chapter that follows is to see how the general principle propounded is both modified and mitigated by Christian and Humanist considerations. Christ—so the Messenger is made to observe, as if in anticipation of the full weight of the Quaker objection to any use of force—abhorred violence and disapproved of it in His followers. To this More answers that the clergy have not in this matter taken the line imputed to them. "Ye shall understand," he cries, "that it is not the clergy that laboureth to have heretics punished by death. Well may it be that, as we be all men and not angels, some of them may have sometime either over fervent mind or indiscreet zeal, or, percase, an angry and a cruel heart by which they may offend God in the self same deed whereof they should else greatly merit. But surely the order of the spiritual law therein is both good, reasonable, piteous and charitable, and nothing desiring the death of any man therein."¹ And the procedure adopted in cases of heresy conforms to this view. The heretic is first required to abjure and do penance and, if this fails, is excommunicated. At this point the Church does its duty by the State in notifying to the civil authority the man's unorthodoxy as a matter of concern—much as to-day a doctor would be bound to notify certain sorts of physical illness—but without recommending either punishment or death. For penalties other than ecclesiastical are the business of the secular authorities. It is their part to take action as they may think fit. And More maintains that the Temporality, as he calls it, would never have taken such rigorous measures but "for the violent cruelty first used by the heretics themselves." Though it would not have seemed to him that it could be a matter of indifference to the rulers of this world whether truth as

¹ Engl. Works, p. 276.

they apprehend it prevails or not, yet in his view the repression of Protestant opinion in his time had originated rather in a desire to keep the peace than to preserve the faith. In other words, the Church, as such, detested bloodshed—*Ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*—whatever might be said of churchmen busy with affairs of State.

Of the Catholic theory of persecution which More here puts forward there has, of course, been no small amount of criticism. It has been denounced as a travesty, as a piece of characteristic hypocrisy, as another of the ingenious inventions by virtue of which the Church of Rome is assumed to conceal its native intolerance. Yet, for all that, it may on calmer examination be found to fit the facts of history more closely than any other thesis. More himself makes the important point that in the epoch of the great doctors of the Church—in the days of Augustine and Ambrose and Chrysostom—the opposition to heresy was conducted by argument, refutation and excommunication. Broadly speaking, this is true, though the coercion of the Donatists and the Priscillianists shows with what reserves any statement to this effect must be received. Whilst the Christian instinct recoiled from force and the Christian reason declared for persuasion, the assertions of the heretics would sometimes so irritate the nerves of the clergy and their aggressions so excite the fears of the government as to unite the rulers of Church and State in a common policy of repression. No such fine line of consistency as logic may desiderate can perhaps, therefore, be drawn between tolerance on the one side and intolerance on the other, and all the less easily that churchmen were so often statesmen. Yet on any broad reading of the facts More's thesis would appear to hold good. It is a sufficiently significant circumstance that the persecution of Priscillian and his followers aroused so much condemnation; a sufficiently salient fact that the great dogmatic controversies about

the person of Christ—the controversies with the Arians, Apollinarians, Nestorians and Eutychians—were attended by little or no shedding of blood; a sufficiently memorable event that St. Bernard at the very apex of the Middle Age should have laid down as a matter of principle that faith should be persuaded and not imposed—*Fides suadenda est, non imponenda*.¹

The truth is, perhaps, that in their inmost being the clergy always knew well enough that the first and last word of Christianity is love; but that in their political capacity as officers of Christendom they were bound to be conscious that the problem of preserving what has been well named “the social tissue” remained over for decision. For at long last false doctrine is not merely subversive of truth, but of civilisation.

To attack the question from the opposite end—from the standpoint of the State and not the Church—is equally to find More’s thesis vindicated. If there is one thing more than another that this century has conclusively demonstrated it is that persecution is no exclusive product of religious orthodoxy. The fall of kings and the relegation of priests to spiritual functions have been coincident with much accentuated intolerance; and Humanity is plainly no longer in any position to lay its inhumanities at the door of the Church or critics to cite the famous tag from Lucretius² and declare that to such evils does Religion persuade. Persecution has prospered and prospered exceedingly in our century of secular and scientific illumination. It was the Third Republic in France which opened the grim ball with the expulsion of the Religious Orders.³ It was Bolshevist Russia

¹ In Cantica. Sermo LXVI.

² “Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.”

³ An Anglican at that time, and in Paris, I have still a vivid recollection of the strictures of a Swedish doctor—a Lutheran—upon the action of the French Government in thus depriving the poor of some of their best friends in the nuns who tended them for nothing, and a not less vivid one of visiting at Versailles, where he was living in private because the Government would not permit him to live in community, the lovable and beloved

that followed with such a masque of murder as neither the France of the Revolution nor the France of St. Bartholomew can excel. It was Germany, liberated and socialised, that sold herself to the Nazis and waltzed in turn with all the devils of irreligious intolerance, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-Christian. And as I write we have the spectacle of Spain! Through half Europe, though in different degrees, with different emphasis, and from different motives, the State has suppressed its critics, or at least allowed them to be suppressed—sometimes with the stick, sometimes with castor oil, sometimes with imprisonment, sometimes with arson, and sometimes with death. To such evils, it would appear, can Liberalism, Atheism, Communism, Socialism, Fascism, Neo-Paganism persuade! And the historian must be careful not to lay at the door of Medievalism a reproach that belongs to mankind.

Not, however, for condemnation are these things cited here, but in proof of the justice of More's contention that the State, and not the Church, is the seat of intolerance. Why should we be surprised by so obvious a conclusion? The Church, as nineteen centuries are there to show, can count with no little assurance upon survival; but upon what do governments and forms of government depend? Their kingdom is of this world, and, like this world, transient; and therefore must their servants fight, use coercion within measure, look to violence in need. Here then is latent the answer to a problem which troubles the Messenger and does not leave Prof. Chambers¹

Père du Lac. To such evil could the Third Republic be persuaded—as to other things of more consequence. Yet my old friend, the present President of Corpus, was writing as late as 1912 in his admirable book on "The Greek Genius" (p. 188) that "the world renounced for ever at the Reformation" Plato's official methods of repressing unacceptable opinion. So little did the performances of modern secular Governments seem at that time conceivable!

¹ "Thomas More," pp. 280, 281.

unmoved—the problem whether a bishop does not in effect kill a heretic by handing him over to the secular authority. Few people on reflection will be disposed to doubt that, whilst a government must be its own judge of what is dangerous to it, and regulate its toleration therefore according to its strength, the Church can say no less than that nothing is more dangerous to the State than a low morality and that a high morality rests in the last resort upon a widespread conviction of spiritual values. What measures precisely the State should take to safeguard its foundations, time, place, and circumstance alone can determine. But certainly the Tudor sovereigns were in no such strong position as to be indifferent to the advantage of what we call nowadays a national front or patient of the idea that religious views have nothing to do with political opinions. There had been the Lollards;¹ there would be the Puritans. There had been Cade; there would be Kett. The first pages of the Bible told of a time when there were no gentlemen; the last of one when there would be a millennium. A religious opinion might well prove to be a political event; and a Lord Chancellor perhaps least of all men was justified in treating it as a thing indifferent. Yet the idea which long prevailed that More was specially concerned with heresy in his capacity as Chancellor is evidently erroneous. When the engines of persecution were strengthened a century before, and the pink of chivalry, the coming hero of Agincourt, approved by his presence at Badby's execution the legislation which was to light the reign of Mary Tudor with so ghastly a glare, it was to the Bishops rather than the Judges that the censorship of opinion had been committed. Heresy, though a civil offence, became in this way a diocesan affair; and the

¹ Gairdner in "Lollardy and the Reformation," Vol. I, p. 189, shows very interestingly how frightened people were, not of a persecution of the Lollards, but of a persecution by the Lollards.

whole situation, both in its nature and working, as seen in the year 1533 through the eyes of one who had been at the head of the legal profession, is admirably shown by a single sentence of More's "Apology." "Let this pacifier," he observes of a critic, "peruse and rehearse by name all the dioceses of England and Wales therewith, and I ween verily that, except London and Lincoln, he shall scant in any one of all the remnant find punished for heresy four persons in five years, and in the more part of them not five in fifteen years, nor delivered into the secular hands in the most part of them anyone in twenty years."¹ In London and Lincoln, both of them vast dioceses, it is true he finds some difference in numbers, yet not so great at that. Ten years before, he recollected hearing that in the latter diocese twelve or fourteen heretics had been abjured to the general satisfaction, but more recently nothing parallel had come to his ears. In London, where foreigners resorted as well as men from all parts of England, more cases of heresy were to be expected; and at a guess he supposed them to exceed the whole of the rest of the kingdom by double or treble. Of these, however, he notices—and the remark tends to strengthen confidence in the accuracy of his statistics—that all came from Essex or the City, Middlesex furnishing no heretics, neither residents nor visitors. Here was plainly an England where one might well live and not have cause to trouble one hundredth part so much about deaths for heresy as we have about road casualties—and we do not trouble a great deal.

For all that, some capital could be made even in the days of Henry VIII out of the charge of persecution; and More was accordingly accused of cruelty of this kind contemporaneously by his enemies and subsequently by Foxe and Froude. Fortunately for us, not so fortunately for the credit of his accusers, his answer to these accusations is on record in his

¹ Engl. Works, p. 900.

"Apology." Much of what had been alleged against him was, as he says, "marvellous lies." Tyndale, for instance, had got hold of a story with which one Segar, a bookseller of Cambridge, who had spent a few days in More's house and, according to its proprietor, had "never had either bodily harm done him or foul word spoken him," used to regale too credulous gossips. This seller and teller of tales would relate how he had been bound to a tree in More's garden and cruelly beaten, and, a rope being fastened tight about his head, had gone off in a faint. It was all highly sensational, and only failed in the one point that it bore no relation whatever to truth. More's personal contribution to persecution was in fact of the most modest description, and hardly to be reckoned persecution until schoolmasters and magistrates are deprived of their rods altogether. There was a boy in his employ who had picked up some offensive, heretical teaching from an apostate priest and imparted it to another child also of the Lord Chancellor's household. For this misconduct More thought proper to have him whipped by one of his servants. And there was also a half-wit, lately lodged in Bethlehem Hospital, and imprudently released from there, who especially during the elevation of the Host in Church was in the habit of assailing ladies engaged in devotion and endeavouring to turn up their skirts and throw these over their heads. Him also More caused to be beaten, and apparently with good results, for the man thenceforward desisted from these unseemly proceedings. Apart from these two victims the Lord Chancellor declares that, so far as he was concerned, none "had never any . . . stripe or stroke given them, so much as a fillip on the forehead." Restraint he was, however, required to use, and did use; and there was one George Constantine whom he put in the stocks, but who proved a match for him and got out. The story went about that this had put More in "a wonderful rage." In fact he had been much amused, and his comments

were made in his best vein. "Never will I for my part be so unreasonable," he declared, "as to be angry with any man that riseth, if he can, when he findeth that he sitteth not at his ease." And here ends the tale of his cruel persecutions—at all events for those who prefer his own word to Tyndale's allegations or Strype's and Foxe's gossip.¹

¹ More's own account of these affairs is to be found in his *Apology*, c. xxxvi.

CHURCH AND STATE

THE great question for England during the two years of More's chancellorship was whether the King's conscience was or was not going to concur with that of its constitutional keeper. Change was in the air men breathed, in the books they read, in the thoughts they uttered; but whether it was to be a change along the lines of conservative development or of radical reform no one but the King only could decide. At Henry's right hand stood More, an Englishman exemplifying to a marked extent, not only the feeling of his compatriots for their old institutions, but their deep-seated faith in God, their kindly acceptance of variety of fortune, and that lovely mirth which caused men to call England merry. And behind Henry stood, still in shadow, Cromwell, the Italianate Englishman, if ever there was one, whom the proverb proclaims a devil incarnate. From the particular point of view in English history where the three men were standing this country spread out before them in unspoilt beauty, its waste land broken by farm and forest, by abbey and castle, by rude hamlets clustering round the village church, by cities more tolerant than our own of the proximity of field and garden, by cathedrals calling prayers heavenward from each high pinnacle and spire and rendered all gl^{or} the within, not only by design and decoration, but and did mystic sense of hidden Deity which draws the eye onwards until it rests upon the Host enthroned in the Tabernacle.

With such a prospect of England before them we may well pause to wonder what visions passed before the minds of that

ill-assorted trio with whose reactions upon one another we are now concerned—the Man of Property, the Man of Affairs, and the Man so fully conscious of another world that he became painfully alive to the state of this one. To Henry a seat of empire and a throne of kings, to Cromwell a commercial speculation, to More potentially an island of the blessed, England lay at perhaps the decisive hour in her history under their hand. What would they make of her? What might they not have made of her, if their minds had not been pulling such different ways? For a diversity of operations quickly appeared.

The Parliament that met in 1529 after the fall of Wolsey was what is usually described as “packed.” “God knoweth what matter of one (was) this parliament of yours!”, More remarked in speaking of it at his trial. And surely not God alone! Even to less searching eyes than those of the Deity it appeared to be a body chosen under pressure from the Crown, composed in great part of Court officials and containing, in the language of a later age, a good proportion of flunkies both actual and metaphorical.¹ That did not prevent it, however, from being representative of a world that liked priests but little and richly endowed ecclesiastics even less. Much in the circumstances evidently depended upon the higher clergy, predominant as they were in the House of Lords by numbers and in their own estate by influence.

The lead fell in the first place to the Bishops; and of their qualifications for leadership it is necessary, in order to understand what occurred, to form some slight idea. They have lately been described in a striking piece of psychological analysis as “a hierarchy that failed”;² and the title is no unfair one. They had, like other men who come into ill-

¹ See on this (Hall?) “St. John Fisher” (ed. Hughes), pp. 105, 106, and H. A. L. Fisher, “Political History of England, 1485–1547, pp. 291, 292.

² Rev. Philip Hughes, *The Clergy Review*, Vol. I, No. 1.

administered estates, their excuses. Their initiative had long worn rusty, corroded by Wolsey's all-embracing legatine authority. Their primate, the occupant of the see of St. Augustine, had, too, by this time of crisis passed the age of eighty, and showed, as the result perhaps of this circumstance combined with a diplomatic and legal training and a late ordination, more regard for prudence than for principle. It all told in the same direction that the disgrace and subsequent death of Wolsey had left Warham without a compeer in the great see of York or an auxiliary in that of Winchester. From London, Tunstall, probably the most distinguished figure on the episcopal Bench, had simultaneously been translated to Durham; whilst Stokesley, who replaced him in the metropolis, was more or less the creature of the King and the promoter of the King's suit for nullity of marriage. Of the aged Nyx of Norwich; of West of Ely and Clerk of Bath, diplomatists both of them; of Kyte of Carlisle and Vesey of Exeter, both pluralists and courtiers; of Standish of St. Asaph, the King's theologian, and Longland of Lincoln, the King's confessor, there is no occasion to say much. These were men, like so many of us, made for quiet times, steady advancement, dignified ease. Not one of them was a man to risk his career or rush upon his fate! Alone amongst all his brethren, Fisher of Rochester stood in a class apart, a great man in a little see, courageous and disinterested far beyond the ordinary, and as ready at seventy years of age for the stern rôle of the prophet as for the thorny crown of the martyr, not to speak of the aureole of the saint.

This Parliament of 1529, whether on its own initiative or the King's, made straight for the mark intended. Seldom an unwelcome topic to laymen in any age, the failings of the clergy had in those times been so well illustrated by certain of their Order that the task of censuring the censors was doubtless more than ever acceptable; and the Commons had

much to say about high fees, non-residence, profits from secular occupations and pluralities. To the legislation they proposed few would now take exception; and the Lord Chancellor does not appear to have done so. He had always been a reformer, and perhaps saw without regret the reduction, or, in the case of the very poor, the disappearance of mortuary dues, the diminution of fees for probate, and the abolition—subject to some consideration for vested interests—of pluralities. It was otherwise with Fisher, who, sensible of the spirit in which these things were being done and mindful of the general interests of his order, accused the Commons, to their great annoyance, of heretical tendencies. He had, as we learn from his speech, not only the fate of Bohemia in his mind, but the quaint, suggestive parable of the axe which, wandering without a handle in a wood, besought the trees for a sapling to make the deficiency good and, upon the request being granted, proceeded to hew them down. Parliament was that axe, the Church the trees, and the King the woodsman.

If the Clergy were richer than clergy ought to be, the Crown was never so rich as it wanted to be; and to take from those that have and give to those that need has in all periods appealed, though with very various meanings, to such as have the power to do it. Henry was no exception. With a grim humour he resolved to make church property pay for the expense of a nullity suit the success of which churchmen had so far prevented.¹ An even finer irony lay in his contention that the acknowledgment of Wolsey's legatine authority had involved the whole nation in a *præmunire*. Though the validity of the Legate's powers had been as fully demonstrated as seemed possible by Henry's presence in person at the trial at Blackfriars, the matter of this charge was treated seriously and turned to full account. The King himself, fortunately enough, could do no wrong, but no such

¹ "St. John Fisher" (ed. Hughes), p. 109.

constitutional doctrine protected the Clergy, whom he held especially guilty. It was consequently proposed to them to compound for their offence by a large increase above the usual subsidy; and to this in their Convocation they consented. Something more, however, it appeared, was required before they could obtain their pardon. They must confess the King to be "Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy." To this they demurred, Fisher foremost in resisting. He it was who, whilst still advising a total rejection of the King's demand, secured the insertion of the famous saving clause "*quantum per Christi legem licet*"—so far as the law of Christ allows—which qualified, however vaguely and importantly, the memorable acceptance of the royal supremacy.¹

The King could hardly quarrel with a phrase which, in substance at any rate, had figured in his Ministers' interpretation of his meaning; yet there can be little doubt that he disliked it, since it vanished when the terms of the submission were incorporated in the Statute of Supremacy. He had, in fact, made up his mind to be the arbiter of all things both spiritual and temporal within his kingdom and to be master of all men's minds. In silence the Province of Canterbury, under Warham's guidance, registered the royal will; and in due course, after a protest from Tunstall, the Province of York did likewise. This was in the early part of the year 1531. A contemporary incident recorded by the Imperial Ambassador reveals the significance, as Henry saw it, of these proceedings. The King was looking over a list of charges of heresy that had been brought against a certain preacher, when he noticed that, amongst other counts in the indictment, the Papal Supremacy was alleged to have been denied. His comment showed what a way he had already gone along the road he was travelling. There was no heresy, he declared, in this opinion, which, he added, was

¹ Hall's(?) "Life of Fisher," p. 122.

"quite certain and true."¹ Issue had, in fact, been joined between the all-embracing despotism of the Tudor Monarchy and the age-long evolution of the Holy See. Yet, that one issue excepted, the King continued, and continued to the end of his days, Catholic enough at all events to satisfy M. Constant and Mr. Belloc, if not Dr. Messenger.² Transubstantiation, auricular confession, clerical celibacy, purgatory, communion in one kind—all the supposed marks of Romanism—these in general he held to and, if with diplomatic lapses, insisted upon. No ritualist could have been more meticulous; no disciplinarian more severe. As late as 1539 he will be found serving Mass on his knees and hanging an incautious subject for neglecting Friday abstinence.³ It was no wonder that the Bishops did not see him plain. He was something new to them—the first "Anglo-Catholic" and a 'spike'—to borrow the expressive jargon of to-day—both independent and masterful, upon which presently heads would be impaled. Had he been a better philosopher, he might not perhaps have mistaken a *via media* for a golden mean; had he been a more original theologian, he might not have preserved so much tradition; and had he possessed a finer sense of history he might have felt more acutely the difficulties attendant on any merely static view either of theology or of the Church in an evolving world. But the problems that he posed for his countrymen were not such as to trouble himself; for he got his way, and got rid of his wife; and this was what chiefly mattered to him.

More was of another and a humaner mind—of a mind, indeed, if Froude's judgment of it at this juncture is correct, the very opposite of Henry's, "too clever and genuine to allow him to deceive himself with the delusions of Anglican-

¹ "Letters and Papers," V, p. 148.

² See Constant, "Reformation in England," c. viii.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

ism."¹ Much better than the Bishops, who—Fisher always excepted—appear to have expected that the rising tempest would pass like a summer shower, did he appreciate the significance of the cloud moving up from the horizon. Declaring, so Chapuys reports, that the King had become practically Pope, he debated with himself the question of resignation—a question always difficult, as countless intemperate political resignations in every age are there to show, but most difficult for one who stood alone amongst his colleagues as defender of the traditional rights of the Church and the Queen. For change, drastic and immeasurable, now to More's eye plainly threatened the time-honoured institutions of his country as Henry strengthened in his desire to make Anne his mistress and Anne stiffened in her resolve, sooner or later, to become his wife.

The King, prompted as all the world knows by Cranmer, whose fortune it made, had latterly been sounding the European Universities to know what they thought of his marriage. And the answers he received, as sometimes occurs when the accredited spectators of all time and all existence bend their thoughts towards mundane controversies and descend into the battle, had coincided to a quite remarkable degree with the opinion of their governments. In Cambridge, where the King had more influence and the Reformation more hold than in Oxford, marriage with a deceased brother's widow was held to be beyond the competence of the Pope to authorise—to be, in fact, as a new school of theology was teaching, prohibited by divine law and no way dispensable under the Christian dispensation, the injunction in Deuteronomy to raise up seed to a deceased brother being for this purpose treated only as some sort of concession to the hardness of the Hebrew heart.² At the other and the older University,

¹ "History of England," I, c. 4.

² See on this Constant, "The Reformation in England," 78 (footnote).

where lost causes never cease to be living causes and are found again by the world after many days or years, there were, as the King observed, "rebellious youths." Even so, however, he obtained by hook or by crook the verdict that he wanted. He was no less successful in the academies of France, whose Sovereign was for the time resting French diplomacy on an understanding with England; and, if he failed in Spain, that was not to be wondered at, with the English Queen a Spanish princess. It was more surprising that his cause should have met with some success at Bologna and Padua, Pavia and Ferrara, though the fact that his emissaries to Italy, the Bishops of London and Worcester, went not unprovided with material inducements to assent, may seem to some minds to weaken the rational force of their moral persuasions.¹

Anyhow, by the year 1531 the King was in a position to confront both Parliament and the Pope with a formidable body of apparently favourable opinion from the seats of European learning. In regard to the former he made his Lord Chancellor, as was natural enough, his spokesman; and again More made a King's speech, setting forth, not his own views, but his client's case. The King, he declared, was seeking a decree of nullity from motives of pure patriotism unadulterated by carnal affection. No peer present probably supposed this to be the Lord Chancellor's private opinion and, if there was any doubt, the answer that he returned to a question put to him must have dispelled the illusion. For, when someone asked what his own views were, he replied that he had often expressed them to the King, and significantly added nothing more.² He had said as much as honour required and more than prudence dictated.

By the close of the year the King felt his hand sufficiently

¹ See on this Fisher, "Political History of England 1485-1547," p. 303; Friedmann, "Anne Boleyn," I, 115; "Ven. Cal.," IV, 1251.

² "L. & P.," V, No. 171. Chapuys' report, April 2nd, 1531.

strengthened by the verdict of the Universities to menace the Pope, who, hoping perhaps soon to see Henry's passion spent, was playing for time, with schism. Here was no idle threat. Parliament, when in 1532 it met again, opened fire on the Papacy with a permissive bill to deprive the Pope of the first fruits or annates which he had been accustomed to take from bishoprics at each new appointment. Much more than this, however, was in the air. In March there appeared the so-called Supplication against the Ordinaries—a petition from the Commons to the Crown that had less the look of a supplication than of such a writing upon the wall as closed the feast of Belshazzar. The hand that wrote was, it is true, neither of supernatural origin nor magical construction. The handwriting, as certain drafts remain to show, was only that of the business-like Cromwell; yet not for this any the less alarming. The spiritual estate, it was plain, had been tried and found wanting, and its freedom was to be taken away from it and given to the King. The Supplication against the Ordinaries was but the forerunner of the so-called Submission of the Clergy.

The petition alleged that the peace of the realm was as much threatened by lack of charity in the ordinaries as by fantastic opinions amongst the people, and recommended, not obscurely, the substitution of lay control over both clerical legislation and jurisdiction. The high charges made for spiritual things and in spiritual courts, the ecclesiastical law's delays, the vexatious, meddling inquisitions, the multiplicity of holidays, the management of probates, all came in for criticism, though probably analagous complaints could with equal effect be brought forward all the world over against civil governments and civil lawyers. This is not to say that justice, or rather its administration, might not have been improved, rebels against authority more gently used, consideration more generally shown to suspects, fees reduced,

holidays diminished, and probates facilitated. The Bishops, in fact, to give them their due, made no extravagant defence. "We cannot," they observed in answer to the King's inquiry what they had to say for themselves, "nor will arrogantly presume of ourselves, as though, being in name spiritual men, we were also in all our acts and doings clean and void from all temporal affections and carnality of this world, or that the laws of the Church, made for spiritual and ghostly purpose, be not sometime applied to worldly intent. This we ought to and do lament, as becometh us, very sore." Yet, they continued, the faults of some particular men ought not to incriminate the whole of their Order: "for, though in many things we all offend, yet not in all things do we all offend." In respect of their manner of prosecuting heresy for which in particular the Commons had called them to account, they urged that theirs was a most difficult, troublesome and thankless office, of which they would be only too glad to be relieved, such "a continued conflict and vexation" did they find it "with pertinacity, wilfulness, folly and ignorance." As for the alleged misuse of their legislative powers, these they had exercised in accordance with the teaching of the Bible and the Church and, whilst they would undertake to give every consideration to any expression of his wishes, they could not surrender or submit their authority to the King. As they pointed out in a subsequent rejoinder, spiritual jurisdiction had never in Christendom been subjected to the temporal power; and so Henry had himself argued in his criticism of Luther. In view, however, of his peculiar wisdom, goodness and learning they intimated that they would so far defer to his wishes as to forgo legislation that he had not authorised, saving only such as the maintenance of the faith rendered necessary.

These familiar flatteries, these cautious concessions were wasted upon such a man as Henry. He knew his aim, and

moved relentlessly towards its accomplishment. Telling a deputation from his obedient Commons that they were "a great sort of wise men," he advised them that the reply of the Ordinaries would give them no pleasure, and presently that he had found out that the Clergy, by reason of the bishops' and abbots' oath of allegiance to the Holy See, were but half his subjects. And with that he required Convocation to pass articles, the effect of which would be to submit all their future legislation to the King's licence and all their past legislation to the King's revision. The unfortunate ecclesiastics, confronted by this demand, discussed, negotiated, and strove as best they might to gain time. But a lion had entered their peaceful precincts. The King, giving the plague for his reason, announced the adjournment of Convocation; and before that adjournment requested a verdict upon his proposals. The Clergy collapsed. Repeating their singular confession of faith in the King's wisdom, goodness and zeal, they surrendered their prerogatives and liberties to his authority. It was May 15th, 1532, a day the more memorable that on the next More resigned the chancellorship. With Bishop Gardiner at his side, he had fought the case against the King's proposals in the Lords up to the last,¹ and the Submission of the Clergy was not, in fact, placed upon the Statute Book till the following year. The old Archbishop had sold the pass for a little bodily peace, though the protest that he placed on record shows that no spiritual peace attended it. His feeble excuse, indeed, if its echo still sometimes penetrates to our ears, sounds all too much like the quavering lament of senility over a day that is gone. The 'Hammer of the Monks,' and of others beside the monks, was already drowning such old-world voices with swift and dexterous blows.

A curious little reminiscence that has been preserved of More at this juncture may fittingly conclude this chapter—a

¹ "L. & P.," V, 1013.

reminiscence showing with what fidelity, and it must be added futility, he tried to the last to reconcile his duty to the King with what was owing to the Church, the Country and the Queen. Sir George Throgmorton subsequently told the King in his confession how, after speaking against the Bill of Appeals, he had been sent for by More and had found him in a little room in the Parliament House leaning, as he recalled the scene, upon a thing like an altar, if it was not one, and talking to the Bishop of Bath—John Clerk, who had been one of Katharine's Counsel and was, after Fisher, perhaps the most pronounced adherent on the Episcopal Bench of the causes associated with her. The Lord Chancellor's object, it is clear, was to give all the moral support and encouragement in his power to any man who had been bold enough to voice the views which he and Clerk had so much at heart; and he did so without disguise. "I am very glad," he said to Throgmorton, "to hear the good report that goeth of you and that ye be so good a Catholic man as ye be. And, if ye do continue in the same way that ye begin and be not afraid to say your conscience, ye shall deserve great reward of God and thanks of the King's Grace at length, and much worship to yourself."¹

¹ Quoted by Froude, "History of England," I, p. 367. Also see "L. & P.," XII, ii, p. 333.

RESIGNATION OF OFFICE

LITTLE or nothing in the way of detail is on record concerning the circumstances of More's resignation. We know only that his discharge was with the utmost difficulty obtained by Norfolk's efforts, so reluctant was the King to consent to his retiring, but that at the final audience Henry behaved very courteously, praising him for the way in which he had done his work and promising him that in any request regarding honour or profit that he might subsequently make, he would find his sovereign "a good and gracious lord."¹ Though the date of More's resignation can be fixed as May 16th, 1532, the day of the audience remains a matter of conjecture. But anyhow the year was at the spring, and, if we assume that More returned to Chelsea by water, it was, presumably, the last time that he passed up the silver street of the Thames in the stately barge with the eight watermen that he now made over to Audley, his successor on the woolsack, if that term is no anachronism. His mood, when in due course he reached his destination, led him towards Chelsea church, where he found Vespers singing. There, too, he found his wife, seated apart in her closed private pew. Waiting till the office was done, he went to the pew door and, opening it after the manner of the gentleman usher who attended on high days and holy days, gave her in the terms customarily employed to announce his departure after service the news of his resignation. "Madam," he said, bowing as he spoke, "my Lord is gone."

¹ Roper.

RESIGNATION OF OFFICE

So at least the story ran as Stapleton heard it from his fellow-exiles of More's household; and with its mockery of pomp and its gibe at this world's values, it is entirely characteristic. Roper, it is true, places the incident later—on the ensuing Sunday or holiday, when Lady More must have become aware of her husband's resignation and the little drama would have seemed, not a short way with emotion, but merely an antic jest. That is as it may be. For anything we can tell, More may have perpetrated the same sally twice. Such lapses are not unknown even with the very best of men when they find their jokes amusing. Family tradition even asserts that he went further with his fun, rebuked his daughters for not remarking something wrong with their step-mother's deportment, and proceeded to tell them that her nose was awry. If so, it is likely that he teased her too much. But awry all the same, poor woman, her nose was, and so remained to the day of his death—and perhaps to the day of hers, in spite of the annuity of £20 which the King of his bounty bestowed in 1536 upon her. She was not any the more singular for that. Many another woman's nose would go crooked if her husband at a single throw were to cast away home, fortune, position and prospects.

For More's resignation had left him with no more than £100 in gold and silver, his chain of office excluded, and for an income the precarious revenue of £100 a year that he drew by the King's grant from the Manors of Duckington, Frinckford and Barlypark, together with another £50 all told from landed property. Multiply these sums by some such figure as Prof. Chambers's fifteen to represent the change in the value of money between that day and this, and the result works out at well over £2000 a year, which is certainly not destitution, yet meant the end, if not of the handsome house that More had built, at least of the happy household that he had made there. Here was no mere dismissal of staff, but a parting

of friends. He had to go through the pain of turning off retainers, many of them gentlemen of good standing, who declared with tears in their eyes that they would sooner serve him for nothing than other men for a high salary. To such a sacrifice, however, he would not listen, but saw to it carefully that they obtained good situations in other suitable establishments. Together with them he parted also with his jester, Pattenson, whom he made over to the Lord Mayor on the understanding that the merry man, now assuredly "moping mum," should become a fool hereditary to all Lord Mayors in succession.

More turned next to the consideration of what was to happen to his family—to that goodly company of children and grandchildren who lived with him at his charges and had no mind to leave him. He invited their counsel in view of the changed conditions, but getting no answer, he proposed, with laughter doubtless lurking in his sleeve, to begin house-keeping on what he called the Lincoln's Inn standard; then, if that proved too expensive, to fall to the fare of Oxford; and finally, if this still exceeded their means, to go a-begging with bag and wallet and a singing of the *Salve Regina* to keep up their spirits. In the end his children with the exception of the Ropers, left him, and meanwhile he made over to his family such property as he had, reserving the income only. But this, except where the gift had been absolute, the Government, when later his possessions were confiscated as a result of his condemnation, refused to recognise. It is true that, had he chosen, he might have put an end at one moment to his financial anxieties. The Bishops and Clergy pressed upon him a sum of four to five thousand pounds—in those days a fair fortune—by way of return for the services he had rendered to the cause of the Church by his writings. But he would take none of it. Friendly and honourable as he felt the offer to be, he declared he would see the money in the Thames

rather than that he or his should touch a penny, just as he would gladly have all his controversial labours lost, if by that means he could put an end to heresy.

Family considerations apart, there is no reason to suppose that More regretted his resignation. A letter that he wrote at this time to Erasmus expressing his sense of relief faithfully reflects the sentiments which he had addressed years before to the outgoing Chancellor when Warham made way for Wolsey. "I ever judged," he had written to the former, "your Paternity happy in the way you exercised your office of Chancellor, but I esteem you much happier now that you have laid it down and entered on that most desirable leisure in which you can live for yourself and for God." To live somewhat "only to God and myself"—that was a wish, so he told Erasmus, which he had entertained from childhood. And, now that the burden of office was sensibly telling upon his health, though he seems to have said little about this to others, he welcomed gratefully the excuse given him to be quit of public affairs. The King had been gracious; he might reasonably hope to be left in peace and retirement. And for a year he was able to devote himself to the two things he had most at heart—a life of devotion and a last word to the Reformers. This, then, was the date when he wrote three works we have yet to glance at—his "Apology," the "Letter against Frith in Defence of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar" and the so-called "Debellacion of Salem and Bizance."

The "Apology" opens with some entertaining observations depreciating himself, requesting the reader's indulgence, and dealing briefly with his critics. He is not the man, he says, to imitate Æsop's ape which thought her own babes of surpassing beauty, nor the crow which thought her young the fairest fowls that flew. Sometimes doubtless he falls, like Homer before him, into a little slumber, when the reader, if he cannot in courtesy sleep likewise, should at least

for company "nap and wink and leave his dream unchecked": so much he has done before now himself as regards the minor, more tolerable faults both of Barnes and Tyndale. As for the criticisms brought against his previous works, despite all the assiduity in fault-finding of the critics, they are rather of the sort that recoil upon the heads of their makers. These accuse him of being long-winded and unreadable; and so leave his writings unread, relying instead upon the opinion of learned persons who, after glancing at what he has to say, declare that there is no force in arguments answered and moreover confuted, as these are reported to have been, in sundry sermons. Then again his critics allege that he does not handle their "new Gospellers," Tyndale and Barnes, with courtesy, favours the clergy too much, stresses what suits him and ignores what does not, lacks impartiality in his judgments, and signally fails to prove what he promised as regards the claims of the Church. With the discussion of these various strictures—so suggestive to us of an eternal similarity in the substance of adverse criticism from his day to ours—the "Apology" is in the main concerned.

To the charge of long-windedness More retorts that to his knowledge men of as good wits and learning as his detractors have found it possible and profitable to read his book three times through. His censors are, in fact, the kind of people who find everything too long from the Mass downwards; but, let them give themselves the trouble to go through any one chapter of his work at random, and he is confident they will find matter there to destroy all the credit of Barnes and Tyndale as guides. Let no one say that he had used these controversialists unfairly, for he had been at much pains either to quote them verbally or to give their arguments full value and elucidation. It showed the intellectual poverty of his critics that his condemnation of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament was said to have been disposed of by a

preacher who declared that poisoned bread was better than no bread at all. No more foolish saying had ever to his knowledge passed for wisdom. He was himself an advocate of a Bible in the vernacular where circumstances were propitious to its use; but a Bible in English was not necessary to salvation or, if it were, then four-tenths of the population must perish from incapacity to read. And once more, in a final endeavour to slay the slain, he goes over ground already familiar to the reader, in which the priority in time of the Church to the Bible is once more demonstrated. Tradition, it follows, forms the core of the deposit of truth; yet, for all that, as regards many questions in issue—the sacramental character of marriage, confirmation, holy orders, supreme unction and the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament—the real point is rather whether we are going to accept the interpretations and expositions of St. Augustine and St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom and St. Basil and the old Doctors of the Church in general, or those of Luther and Melancthon, Zwingli and Ecolampadius, Tyndale and Barnes. The wits of these last two, whom he is accused of treating discourteously, he admits to not holding in high esteem, so far, that is, as their formulation of heresies is concerned. Though he could not go all the way with Father Alphonsus, the Spaniard, who told him that devils showed no deformities of appearance, but were rightly figured as beautiful women with sharp, cruel minds—an opinion that it was, in his judgment, inexpedient for young men with their reckless spirit of adventure to get hold of—he was advised by divers doctors that a fall from grace left devils still with their natural graces; and he felt that, if the devils were so favoured, Tyndale, Barnes and their like had come off none too well “for in good faith God had, as it seemed . . . taken away the best part of their wits.”¹ His writings had been unfavourably

¹ “Apology,” c. ix.

contrasted with those of one who had lately written on the unhappy divisions between clergy and laity with a gentleness to which he himself, "simple, plain body" that he was, could lay no claim. For if the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church were to be insulted after the manner of the Reformers, he must be excused for his sharp strictures upon sexual unions between monks and nuns which, as the world well knew, were "beastly and abominable indeed."

Then, as to his clerical propensities or partialities, what, he wondered, had given birth to that idea? He was essentially a layman, twice wed, and consequently ineligible in any circumstances for the priesthood. He had never said the clergy were faultless nor excused their faults. His severity towards clerical delinquents whilst he was in power had indeed been so notorious that there was no one into whose hands a criminous clerk less desired to fall.¹ If, however, the point of the charge against him of clerical partiality lay in the fact that he had not hunted out transgressions, his reply was that neither with clerk nor layman would he do any such thing;² he had not found enough virtue in himself to make such conduct seemly.

Leaving this personal aspect of the matter, More turned to the larger issue raised by a treatise on the divided condition of the country. Its author—a lawyer in touch with Court circles, Christopher St. German by name, whom More styles 'the Pacifier'—had put forward anonymously

¹ Engl. Works, p. 868.

² The "D. N. B." instances the case of Petit, which is described both in Strype's *Memorials*, I, 202, 203 (pp. 312–313) and in Nichols's "Narratives of the Reformation" (pp. 26, 27) as proving that More took an active part in heresy-hunting. More is said there to have gone himself to Petit's house in 1530 or 1531 to see if Petit possessed heretical books, and Petit, though presently discharged, is said to have died of the effects of his arrest. But the witness to all this appears to be Mrs. Petit, and I think, in view of More's statement above, that we need to have some further corroboration before we accept the idea that a Lord Chancellor acted as a police-officer.

a diagnosis of then existing discontents well calculated to promote the King's purposes and Cromwell's. Behind a cover of apparent moderation and upon a pretext of promoting better relations between the spiritual and temporal factors in the State, he had, as More saw him, insinuated a number of dubious, damaging charges against the clergy. "Some say" and "They say" were phrases that slipped all too readily off his pen. "And beside all the faults that he bringeth in under 'some say' and 'they say'," observes More caustically enough, "some that himself saith without any 'some say' be such as some say that he can never prove and some, they say, be plain and open false."¹

In this manner, then, and without committing himself, the Pacifier had been able to bring the wealth of the clergy under review and to excuse and explain the standpoints of its ill-assorted critics. Though he does not himself take exception to such doctrines or institutions as purgatory, indulgences, pilgrimages, chantries or trentals, he has a sympathetic word to say for the zealots who would have ecclesiastics without riches altogether, for the discreet persons who would reduce the wealth of the Church to a sufficiency, and for the politic people who attack the above-mentioned sources of clerical revenue, not because their spiritual efficacy was doubted, but because their financial accompaniments were disliked. The Pacifier was, in fact, in More's eyes confusing counsel by shallow amenities that passed for charitable agreements. What, to take a concrete case, would the Pacifier do with such a heretic as John Frith, lately arrested by the King's command and now lodged in the Tower—a young man, "mad" as we like to say when a young man's wits run off into some kind of intellectual extravagance and as indeed More said at the time, yet a good enough scholar to arouse More's humanist sentiment and make him declare that everyone, lay or spiritual,

¹ Engl. Works, p. 874.

must want, no less than the Pacifier himself, to save Frith, if only this could be done without peril to other men's souls. For Frith was writing even still against purgatory, against the religious orders, and against the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It was this last count in the indictment which above all attracted More's attention and outraged his sentiments. The Holy Eucharist was for the old English the ark of the covenant; and consequently the doctrine of transubstantiation, to borrow Gairdner's words, was either "a truth of the very highest importance or very mischievous falsehood."¹ To conceive a man's feelings who in that age should for the first time see that venerable rite and time-honoured doctrine coarsely and clumsily assailed is, even among those for whom these things retain their ancient meaning, no slight effort of imagination. Only perhaps the serene contemplation, in a complete freedom from the prejudices of a later date, of such a masterpiece as Van Eyck's "Adoration of the Lamb" will suffice to quicken senses, long dulled by the impact of less ethereal air, to values and harmonies still prevalent when More was young. The design of Christendom had, in fact, been inspired by the thought, which that famous panel depicts, of the Lamb of God raised upon the Altar of Sacrifice in the midst of a world adoring. To that sacrificial height the medieval cultus of the Host, moving in sympathy with the mind of him who was at once the author of "The City of God" and the re-maker of European civilisation, had drawn all eyes. "No one," St. Augustine had said, "eats the flesh of Jesus Christ without having first adored it . . . and, far from sinning in so doing, he would sin if he did not."²

Adoration; adoration of God; adoration of the Lamb of God really present upon our altars—these notions are far removed from the prolegomena to politics that pass current

¹ Gairdner, "English Church in the Sixteenth Century," p. 134.

² In Ps. xcvi.

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in our time. We need not for that suppose that More's contemporaries were mistaken. It is not only the sublime Augustine but the cynical Disraeli who declares, through the mouth of Sidonia, that "man is made to adore and to obey," and adds, with profound insight into human nature, that "if you will not command him, if you give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities."¹

It is along the road thus indicated, then, that heresy is drawn into the category of treasons. For where the equilibrium of society is seen to rest upon a belief in two worlds, infidelity to God becomes at least as grave a matter as disloyalty to king or country. "Well he wotteth," More exclaims with reference to the Pacifier, "that heresy, whereby a Christian Man becometh a false traitor to God, is in all laws, spiritual and temporal both, accounted as great a crime as is the treason committed against any worldly man."²

To cry "Peace! peace!" like the Pacifier, and call upon the clergy to ensue it, was evidently to underrate the problem in a world as gravely out of joint as the Europe of the Tudors, and much as if a man to-day should require the Arab or the German to sit down with the Jew or the Bolshevik to love his brother Fascist. Two cultures were in conflict, two camps in formation. Those in possession saw no reason to give way, and those desiring to get possession saw no reason to moderate their endeavours. The crisis of Christendom, if not yet of Christianity, had come.

Little incidents furnished the signs of the times for those who cared to see them. Within More's hearing, for instance, Bayfield, whom the King burnt at the stake to one side of his new *via media* just as in due course he hung the Carthusians to the other, had boasted that half the men in every shire were convert to the new ideas. And Tunstall, when still

¹ "Coningsby," iv, 13.

² Engl. Works, p. 910.

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Bishop of London, had, as More records, shown him a letter couched in such language as revolutionaries love and foretelling the advent of a "day," presumably of wrath, for bishops and all the sort of them. Catholics, if More is right, took the Protestant talk that went on very tolerantly,¹ confident as they were in their cause, and, as he thought, too confident. Truth, he argued, was in their view so great that it must prevail; but had they any real title to leave it thus to look after itself? Not as he saw things; nor perhaps as we any of us see them when our best-prized verities are threatened. Few at any rate are they, even among those still susceptible to the charms of liberal doctrine, who would really leave the fate of popular education and public morals completely at the mercy of every wandering wind that blows. No statesman can ultimately avoid the responsibility of recommending, and sometimes of insisting upon truth as he sees it. Thus, as it seemed to Thomas More, the Parliaments of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had been right in the line they took against the Lollards; and he pointed to Oldcastle's subsequent rising against Henry V as an effect of heresy condoned and not of heresy persecuted. In this manner he reaches the conclusion that the famous Statute *de heretico comburendo*, passed in 1401, was "a very virtuous and very prudent Act."

It may seem, perhaps, a shade less deplorable that More should have praised that legislative horror, if we remember how much worse hanging, with its accompaniments of drawing and quartering, was then than it sounds now, and, on the other hand, how much mitigated burning could be if, as sometimes in England, a bag of gunpowder tied round the throat of the sufferer, induced swift suffocation or, as sometimes on the Continent, a timely blow on the head or a cord round the neck brought the ghastly business to a premature end. But

¹ Engl. Works, p. 923.

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the old lawyer was at the moment no more concerned either to criticise the form of punishment or to show his own heart's pity for the criminal than a modern judge with the black cap upon his head. He took the law as he found it, satisfied that in the interest of the community, and even of the offender, the offence required drastic discouragement, and hardly troubling to discuss whether the repression used was not in excess of the repression needed. There is nothing remarkable, if something regrettable, in the fact that so often the punishment does not fit the crime. Until lately cheating at cards could be punished with life-long ostracism from society, when perhaps no more was required than exclusion from the card-table. But let that be, for, paradox as it will seem to some, the innermost charities of More's mind were not stayed by his Catonian regard for public virtue. "As touching heretics," he observes in the conclusion of the very treatise, "I hate that vice of theirs and not their persons, and very fain would I that the one were destroyed and the other saved. And that I have toward no man any other mind that this (how loudly soever these blessed new brethren, the professors and preachers of verity, belie me) if all the favour and pity that I have used among them to their amendment were known, it would, I warrant you, well and plain appear."¹

This same temper of mind is apparent in More's dealings with the unfortunate Frith already mentioned, and soon to be sent to the stake. That argumentative product of the two Universities had, as we have seen, shown neither wisdom nor restraint, neither regard for pieties consecrated by centuries of devotion nor reverence for what better, if not braver men than himself had held holiest. Yet, had it not been that, as he declared, "the contagion of a heresy creepeth on like a canker," More would gladly have saved the clever, contentious young man; and it was the sense of a plain public duty that

¹ "Apology," c. xlix.

led him to write the letter against Frith which figures in his Works. An attack such as the Reformer had made upon the Sacrament of the Altar left indeed a Catholic apologist with little option except to reply, for it struck at the very keel of a castle in respect of which the Pope was but as the guardian of the outer gate. In Frith's view, the sacramental species were "only bare bread and wine," a remembrance of Christ's Passion requiring no consecration. More's answer is the simple one that the terms used by Christ with reference to the Eucharist preclude any figurative interpretation. As a modern authority has put it, "Bread might certainly typify Him; but, had that been all He meant, would He not have said 'I am Bread?'"¹ It is anyhow obvious that any writer would have been at pains to elucidate the doctrine in that sense, if it was the true sense, after its first hearers had, on his own showing, actually inquired of one another "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" and left Christ because His teaching was too hard for them. Protestantism of Zwingli's cast—and it was Zwingli whose views Frith had taken over—had reacted intellectually to the metaphysic of the subject in much the same way as the Jewish mind before it; and, after fifteen centuries of profound mystical meditation on the supreme mystery that Christianity proposes, the Church was confronted by the reappearance of a criticism almost identical and almost as crude. No doubt it was trying enough to men as intellectually acute as More, who felt sure that on this point the considered thought of Christendom had been finally fixed. And no doubt it added a final touch to the provocation to have Frith maintaining that, whilst he thought himself that there was no truth in either, it was really of no particular consequence whether transubstantiation and purgatory were true or not. Half the tragedy of the time is to be found in the fact that men must needs recklessly drag into the

¹ Hedley, "The Holy Eucharist," p. 20.

wrangling discussions of the market-place questions of such metaphysical profundity as to require in the disputants, not only the urbane wisdom of this world in debate, but the meek wisdom of another in decision.

With his statesmanlike perception that political society cannot ultimately shirk a decision between truth and error in respect of the essentials of Christianity, and his growing conviction that unorthodox views were rapidly gaining the upper hand and would cost the world dear, More made no secret in writing to Erasmus of the desire, recorded also in his epitaph, to be "troublesome to heretics." He wished, as he tells Cochläus, that his skill in Scripture and divinity were such that he could write "fruitfully and with good effect" against these "plagues of the world." Yet, whilst he could impulsively say that he so hated this sort of men that he would be their sorest enemy unless they repented, it is plain that his inmost dispositions remained kind—so kind, indeed, that Gairdner, with his wide knowledge of the period and after a close study of the evidence, declares that "nothing More ever did was tainted with inhumanity."¹ For the stories which Foxe once propagated of his causing Tewkesbury, a leather-seller, and Bainham, a squire's son, to be whipped and tortured in his garden have long been dismissed as striking examples of that martyrologist's prolific fancy; and the worst that can be said of him is that it was at his house that the Bishop of London condemned the former of those unhappy men to death for going back upon an abjuration he had made, and persuaded the latter to make an abjuration upon which he subsequently went back.

There, maybe, the matter is best left, though More, in his "Debellacion of Salem and Bizance," carried into another hundred pages his controversy with "Sir John Somesay," the Pacifier, whose continued devaluation, if not defamation of

¹ "English Church in the Sixteenth Century," p. 131.

the clergy caused him extreme annoyance. "On s'obstine davantage dans son moi," observes George Sand in an analysis of the consequences to be attended from a critical correspondence between friends, "mais en s'obtinant dans son moi, on le complète, on l'explique mieux, on le développe tout à fait."¹ Some advantage of the same sort, it is to be hoped, More derived from his conflict with foes, for there will be students who, as they put down the "Debellacion," will echo with even fuller meaning the cry of the "Apology," "Would God the world were such as every man—spiritual, temporal, and all—were so good that neither part could find fault in other, and all these heresies . . . (were) clean forgotten. . . ."² There seems, however, no good reason to invite the reader to review a series of arguments already sufficiently elaborated, or to tempt him to unseemly jesting, such as More would himself have taken in good part, about the length of the duel between Sir John Somesay and Sir Thomas Longsay. The knights, as the doggerel has it, are dust, and their good swords rust: their souls are with the saints, we trust. And besides for us at this stage of the story the features and armour of the Catholic champion are fast changing into those of the Catholic saint.

¹ "Corresp. entre G. Sand et G. Flaubert," p. 7.

² "Apology," c. xlviii. I have here, for grammatical reasons slightly changed the order of the words.

XVIII

RESIGNATION OF SPIRIT

THE August that followed More's resignation brought Henry a great piece of good fortune in the death of Archbishop Warham. With the See of Canterbury vacant "Nan Boleyn's" road to the throne lay open. In September, ten days after Warham's decease, she was created Marchioness or, as some authorities have it, "Marquis" of Pembroke. In October Henry took her to France, where, half mistress, half wife, and perhaps in strict truth neither, she met with much attention from Francis, but none at all from the French princesses. In November the former chaplain of the Boleyns was recalled from abroad to be made Archbishop of Canterbury; and in March Cranmer—for that chaplain was he—secured his bull of confirmation in that office from Rome. Anne meantime had been married. One day in the autumn of 1531, if not sooner, she had conceded what Henry had so long sought, and by January 1532, she was aware that a child, who was to have been the long-wished-for Prince of Wales, but proved to be Queen Elizabeth, was upon its way. On the confident assumption that the unborn babe would be a boy, the royal nuptials were secretly celebrated at a date which is generally given as January 25th, and by a priest who is supposed to have been an Augustinian friar of the name of Brown; and on Easter Eve Anne attended Mass as Queen of England. It was not, however, until the end of May that the new Archbishop, acting without any authority from Rome, pronounced the King's old marriage with Katharine invalid and the new marriage with Anne correct. He was in no strong position to do otherwise. His own record was not

beyond criticism. He had been married twice; he had taken between his first and second marriage a vow of celibacy; he had got his German wife concealed abroad; and he could have been deposed and disgraced as an incontinent prelate, had Cromwell, who knew these details, chosen to make them known.¹ Fortunately, however, for himself, he was just good enough to satisfy the national idea of what a primate ought to be, and just bad enough to meet the royal requirements also. Honest man as he was in his way, though with no honest mind, by nobody does he seem to have been much disliked, whilst Henry liked him well, so plausible was he and pliable, so great a master of the solemn music of words, so responsive, we may at least surmise, in his unstable soul to the ebb and flow, the wind and storm and sweet air of human life, and, in fact, to all that swift sea-change in things which our island tongue, through his conversion of the breviary into a book of common prayer, learnt to convey.

The full significance of the new Archbishop's action in facilitating the exchange of Katharine for Anne, was not lost upon Thomas More. "God give grace," he observed to Roper, "that these matters within a while be not confirmed with oaths." Roper, whose eyes were generally holden where politics was concerned, thought nothing of this opinion, and felt not a little annoyed with his father-in-law for seeming to meet trouble half-way. Events, however, moved steadily in the manner of More's prediction.

Anne, by now well advanced in her pregnancy, was crowned within a few days of Cranmer's verdict. Gaily she went in gems and gold from the Tower to the Abbey; and on that first day of June the people made some pretence of making merry with her. More's great friends upon the Bishops' Bench did what they could to prevail on him to attend the ceremony. Perhaps because they knew how ill his absence would be

¹ Friedmann, "Anne Boleyn," I, c. 5.

received, Tunstall and Clerk and Gardiner sent him a present of twenty pounds for the purchase of a wedding-garment, together with a request for his company in the procession. They should have known him better. His fidelity to the Church held firm; whilst his love of mischief was aroused. He took the gift, perhaps the more readily that it saved him from further pressure, but, when the day came, he failed to appear; and all the Bishops got for their pains, when next they met him, was flouts and fables. He had been well content, he said, they being no beggars and he no Croesus, to grant their first request and get himself a gown at their charges; but, as for the second, he was not prepared to lose his virginity like the girl in the story who was deflowered by the Emperor's orders so that she might lose her legal exemption and become eligible for death. "Take heed, my lords," he added, "that you keep your virginities. For some there be that by procuring your Lordships first to be present at the coronation, and next to preach for the setting forth of it, and finally to write books to all the world in defence thereof, are desirous to deflower you and, when they have deflowered you, then will they not fail to devour you."¹

Cresacre More conjectures that the words came to Anne Boleyn's ears, and caused her to regard his great-grandfather with implacable hostility and repeat the rôle of Herodias. It may have been so, for words such as his are commonly winged. Yet they were not needed to awaken the new Queen's enmity. When the very Bench of Bishops, Fisher always excepted, was bowing before her and the storm, which was Henry, behind her, the absence of the ex-Chancellor from her coronation, following as it did upon his resignation from office, was enough comment on her conduct and contempt of her Court to have aroused the ire of Juno and attracted the thunderbolts of Jove.

¹ Roper.

More at all events entertained no illusions as to the peril in which he now stood. He lay awake at night, envisaging the worst that could happen, steeling himself for death, subduing a flesh "so tender and frail" that in his own words "it could not endure a fillip." Yet to his family he seems to have said nothing directly of this inward struggle; and his wife was not the woman to find it out. Only about this time he would, as Roper notes, turn the talk towards subjects of which the application to his own case could hardly be doubtful. He spoke of martyrs and martyrdoms, of the benediction conferred upon such as for the love of God lost life or lands, of heaven and hell, and of the joys of the one and the pains of the other. And he would even dwell upon the difference it must make to him if he had the encouragement of his family behind him, so that he might be able, to "run merrily," as he phrased it, to death in a good cause.

These sad premonitions and lacerating paradoxes must have fallen strangely upon ears accustomed to the gay and genial intercourse of the happiest house in Christendom. Not satisfied, however, that his grave words had steadied their minds against a sudden shock, More resolved to preconstruct the scene that he anticipated. One day there came a knock upon the door as they sat at table; and after it the king's apparitor stepped into the room and summoned the master of the house to appear the next day before the royal commissioners. The crisis sifted the company like wheat. Some of those present wept, others bore themselves bravely; and More rebuked or commended them accordingly. But there was as yet nothing to fear. The whole incident was a trick, and he himself the author of it.

Summer moved on towards autumn; and in the last days of summer—on September 7th, 1533—she who was one day to be Queen Elizabeth was born. Her birth, however, was little calculated to sweeten her mother's temper. A boy

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would have been everything; a girl merely repeated Katharine's default. So Queen Anne continued in no mood to amnesty her enemies; and from the Court her finger continued to point at More. At her side stood Cromwell, the master of a sharp, unscrupulous police, and as near a thing, perhaps, to Fouché as England ever cast up. One day or another these two hoped to take More by craft; and even the unlikeliest possibilities were probed in attempts to catch him. It was rumoured that he had written a reply to the official explanation, lately put out, of the King's matrimonial proceedings and given it to his nephew, William Rastell, to print; but in a letter to Cromwell he was able to deny as well the knowledge required as the impertinence involved in such an enterprise. It was rumoured, too, that he had taken bribes as Lord Chancellor; and Anne's father, in high hopes, brought the case before the Council. More had the fun of confessing that he had, in fact, taken a great gilt cup from a Mrs. Parnell, whose husband had been engaged in some successful litigation in the Chancellor's Court; the fun of hearing Lord Wiltshire—Sir Thomas Boleyn that was—say to the Council "I told you so"; and then the fun of adding quietly that, after drinking the lady's health, he had given the cup back to her.

The memorials of his life contain mention also of another enterprising woman, the possessor of large means, a Mrs. Crocker by name, who made herself similarly tiresome; though it is not clear whether her doings ever came to the Council's ears. Anyhow a case decided in Mrs. Crocker's favour against Lord Arundel had brought the Lord Chancellor a New Year's gift from her of a pair of gloves with eighty gold angels inside them. More kept the gloves out of politeness and gave back the angels out of propriety; and that perhaps was the best thing he could have done. His dealings with another kind of female got him into much graver trouble.

There had been for some years past much excitement over a servant maid, subsequently a nun, in the county of Kent—one Elizabeth Barton, who, either through illness or occult influences of an upper or nether origin, developed such powers as to persuade many intelligent people that she was a saint and a prophetess. Taken up by the Benedictines of Canterbury, she satisfied Fisher of her integrity, aroused the curiosity of Wolsey, was patronised by Warham, and eventually came to the notice of the King. About the year 1525 Henry handed to More a report upon a roll that he had received from Warham, with her communications, whilst in a state of trance, inscribed upon it. More thought them pretty poor stuff; but, like the rest of us, when rubbish is made much of by people of repute, hesitated, as he told the King, to pronounce finally against a woman so widely honoured. Not, however, until the Christmas of 1532, though he often heard her mentioned, did More hear more of her wonders. At that date a Friar Observant, Father Risby, who happened to be stopping a night with him, related that the Nun had told Wolsey of a vision in which she had seen the Cardinal with three swords in his hand, signifying, as she interpreted it, the Cardinal in the exercise of his functions as Legate, as Chancellor, and as judge in the King's matter. At the mention of the King's marriage, More cut Risby short, saying he would hear no revelations about that, and so turned the talk into less dangerous courses. After Christmas, Shrovetide; and after Risby, Rich, another Friar Observant of Richmond! Again, as More sat talking with the latter towards supper-time there was a reference made to the revelation of the three swords, and again More refused to have the King's business introduced. Father Rich's tales of the Nun were strange and silly—or so at least More thought them—and the more that they were only hearsay. Nevertheless he gave a woman whom he had heard so well spoken of, the benefit of the doubt.

And then, one day when he happened to be at Sion Monastery, the Fathers, who were far from uncritical of the Nun themselves, pressed him so much to see her that he returned there for the purpose. Finding her alone in a little chapel, he told her that he had sought an interview, not from curiosity about the wonders related of her, but because of what he had heard of her goodness and from a wish to be remembered in her prayers. She answered in a manner that he liked better than certain reports of her had led him to expect; and he formed a high opinion of her in spite of her telling him a tale of the devil's freaks fully as strange as that of Luther's encounter with the devil in the shape of a black dog which reappears in substance in Goethe's "Faust." No word was said of the King; but afterwards More, in the kindness of his heart, sent her a warning to refrain from discussing the state of the realm and to confine her conversations, especially with great people, to spiritual things.

The Fathers of Sion were naturally very curious to know how the Nun had impressed the Lord Chancellor. He told them that he judged very well of her by her talk, but that she was "never the nearer tried for that," since a woman who appeared good would need to be a pretty bad lot to make him think ill of her without proof to the contrary. There were monks, however, as More knew to his cost, who grew more or less crazy about this astonishing impostor, for impostor in the main she proved on her own confession to be. There was one, Brother Williams, for instance, from the Charterhouse at Sheen, who bored him to tears with an account of her doings. "None other thing we talked," he told Cromwell, "nor should have done of likelihood, though we had tarried much longer, he took so great pleasure, good man, to tell the tale, with all the circumstances."

Not to fall, then, though without his excuse of enthusiasm, into Brother Williams's fault, the story of the Nun of Kent,

so far as it enters into the life of Thomas More, must be brought to a quick conclusion. It was in 1533 that Elizabeth Barton reached the summit of her fame and her folly. The year was a very critical one for Henry. According to Chapuys,¹ he was at this date more hated than Richard III; and it can at least be said with confidence that the tide of popular opinion was running strong against his second marriage. The scandal in their midst and the scandalous conduct of their ruler caused men even to turn their eyes abroad; and it is instructive to observe how the thought of treason to the King was compensated by that of loyalty to his suzerain, the Holy Roman Emperor. To the secular as well as to the spiritual unity of Europe Latin civilisation still lent its support; and a rebellion against Henry became more tolerable to the conscience, if it possessed the countenance of Charles.

Upon this rising flood of moral indignation the hapless, reckless Nun was borne to her doom. Trusting to prophetic powers that she did not possess, and presuming that the mills of God would grind at a speed to suit her convenience, she had foretold that Henry could not survive a marriage with Anne more at the most than a six-month. The half-year passed, and the nun was discredited. Then Cromwell, well aware of the sort of talk that was about and wishing to make an example of the chief talker, arrested, exposed and eventually executed the false prophetess. He struck simultaneously at her connection—at the patrons, proselytes and priests who had given her countenance—and in the Bill attainting her and her more immediate supporters of treason, More and Fisher were likewise charged with misprision. Ingenuity might, perhaps, contrive to twist something out of Fisher's favourable attitude towards Elizabeth Barton's revelations. But out of More's cautious proceedings there was really nothing to be made; and Cromwell, if at first a little sceptical as to the credi-

¹ "L. & P.," VI, 508.

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bility of the concluding assurance in More's explanation that "neither good man nor bad, neither monk, friar nor nun, nor other man or woman in this world should make him digress from . . . truth and faith," either towards God or the King, seems, after further inquiry, to have recognised that his quarry would have to be taken in another net. That was no longer too difficult.

More had asked to be publicly heard in his own defence by the King or as the King might appoint, but it was decided apparently by the House of Lords, in accordance with the King's wishes, that he should appear before the Star Chamber. The Committee of Council which heard him consisted of four persons only, but those four the most important subjects in the realm—the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Lord Chancellor; Norfolk, whose rank gave him the appearance of prime minister; and Cromwell, whose abilities made him really so. Amongst these More had a friend, but not a friend in need, in Norfolk. Of the others Cranmer was opposed to him both in matters of Church and State, Audley had the unenviable task of filling the post he had vacated, whilst with Cromwell policy counted for everything and justice and humanity for nothing.

The Commissioners in the friendliest fashion told their old colleague to sit down; but with a better appreciation of circumstances than they at all events cared to show, More resolutely declined their courtesy. Then Audley, who as Lord Chancellor seems to have acted as their chairman, got to work. He dwelt upon the King's benevolence in More's regard, upon what More had received and upon what More might still look for, if a like goodwill were shown by him in return. More had only to do as the rest of the nation had done, as Parliament had done, as the Universities had done, as the Bishops had done—had only to acknowledge Anne as Queen in place of Katharine—and all was his.

In all this there was no mention made of the Nun. She had slipped out of view; and in her stead had appeared the image of Anne Boleyn soliciting recognition as Henry's wife. More replied quietly that no man living would more gladly have pleased the King than he, but that of the King's marriage he had hoped, after the King had said that he should be no further molested, to have heard no more. The Commissioners reasoned with him, but argument left him as inflexible as the offer of honours or profits. To the best of his ability he had made up his mind on the issue, and by his decision he stood. Then, as by magic, the charged atmosphere changed. Terrorism took the place of persuasion; and the Commissioners spoke to him no longer kindly. No servant the King had was such a villain, no subject such a traitor; and in proof of it they called to witness the guile with which he had provoked and encouraged the King to write his book against Luther, whereby a sword was thrust into the Pope's hand to use against the author.

More was the last man to be intimidated by this sort of nonsense. "My Lords," he answered with simple dignity, "these terrors be arguments for children, and not for me." And with that he denied that he had ever counselled the publication of the "Defence of the Seven Sacraments" and, as has been already related, affirmed his own part to have been that merely of "a sorter out and placer" or, as we say, of an editor. No one could bear better witness to this than the King, whom he had reminded at the time both of the Pope's position as a temporal prince and of all the danger of dispute inherent in it as well as of the Statute of Præmunire limiting the papal authority in England. The effect of his observations, he pointed out, had been to draw from the Sovereign the following reply: "Whatever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost; for we received from that See of Rome our

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crown imperial." "Which," he added drily, "till his Grace with his own mouth told it me, I never heard of before. I trust," he concluded, "that when His Grace shall . . . call to his gracious remembrance my doings in that behalf, His Highness will never speak of it more."

Pleasure is said to be derived from seeing a big bully thrashed; and there was never a bigger bully thrashed in England than on that March morning of 1534. It is not surprising in the circumstances that the Commissioners, as Roper notes, "displeasantly departed." The King's instructions to flatter or in the alternative to frighten his old friend had only resulted in the most damaging disclosures as to the monarch's conception of the Papacy before the days when Anne had first appeared; and the "Big Four"—to use an expressive, if inelegant Americanism—amongst the King's counsellors had been made for a moment to exchange their high seats, judicial robes and threatening rods for the position of a royal whipping-boy stripped and kneeling upon the block of humiliation. If they went away sore and "displeased," More, as he regained his boat, was at his merriest, yet before the watermen told Roper little or nothing of what had passed. It was not, in fact, until they landed at Chelsea and were walking alone in the garden that Roper, who had made a great point before they started for Westminster of the importance of getting More's name cut out of the Bill of Attainder, ventured to say that he trusted all was well, since More was so cheerful. The dialogue that followed deserves to be reported verbatim, for nature made it so good that not Shaw nor Shakespeare could have made it better.

More: "It is so indeed, son Roper, I thank God."

Roper: "Are you then put out of the Bill?"

More: "By my troth, son Roper, I never remembered it."

Roper: "Never remembered it, sir! A case that toucheth

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yourself so near, and us all for your sake. I am sorry to hear it; for I verily trusted that all had been well."

More: "Wilt thou know,¹ son Roper, wherefore I was so merry?"

Roper: "That would I gladly, sir."

More: "In good faith I rejoiced that I had given the devil a foul fall and that with those Lords I had gone so far as without great shame I could never go back again."

"At which words," comments Roper, "waxed I very sad, for though himself liked it well, yet liked it me little."

Henry, though for a very different reason, liked the report of the meeting very little either. He was so angry at his discomfiture that he swore the Bill should go forward. There was still, however, some spirit left among the English nobility; the attainder would not, it was known for certain, be carried without More's being heard; and Audley and his fellow-councillors had too lately experienced the effect of the ex-Chancellor's flawless integrity to view with anything but dismay the prospect of having his case brought before the House of Lords. Caught in the tempest of the King's indignation, yet apprehensive of yet louder thunder if the Bill failed to pass, the embarrassed statesmen fell upon their knees and entreated the raging monarch to forbear. They urged the loss of prestige that he would suffer if the Bill was lost; they insinuated some unctuous assurances of public satisfaction at his straight dealing with the Nun; and they whispered that they had good hope of finding other matter that was better fitted for the undoing of Thomas More. The sovereign allowed himself to be mollified by these considerations, and next day, when Roper ran across Cromwell in the House, he learnt from that powerful person that his father-in-law's name had been removed from the Bill of

¹ The dialogue seems to show that at this date a father-in-law would "tutoyer" his son-in-law, but not the son-in-law his father-in-law.

Attainder. Engaged as it happened to dine in London, Roper hurried the news off by messenger to his wife at Chelsea. But More heard it without losing for an instant his good sense of realities. "Meg," he observed laconically, "*quod differtur non aufertur*"—"What is deferred is not abandoned."¹

If there was any doubt of the accuracy of this diagnosis, a casual conversation with Norfolk which followed should have been sufficient to establish it. That old friend, who, though powerless to avert it, must have known what was impending, did his best to break down in private the iron resolve against which in public he had no stomach to contend. "By the Mass, Master More," he urged, "it is perilous striving with princes; therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure; for by God's Body, Master More, *indignatio principis mors est*." "Is that all?" came the characteristic retort. "Then in good faith there is no more difference between your Grace and me but that I shall die to-day and you to-morrow."

It was, then, in the full conviction of a final crisis approaching and in the full consciousness of immediate and grave personal danger, that More put together for Cromwell's benefit a statement of his views upon the principal issues raised at his recent examination. The rough draft can be read in his English works, the more considered version in the Cotton MSS,² but the variations appear to be unimportant.³ As throughout the conduct of his case, his presentation of his views is noticeably free from that element of challenge which so often vitiates the moral force of a witness of unimpeachable courage and disinterestedness. "Never was there," he says

¹ I am, of course, only translating freely.

² Cleopatra E. vi, f. 150-152.

³ Bridgett (p. 345, note) says that Rastell has "supremacy," where the Cotton MSS. have "primacy." I do not follow this. The English Works (p. 1427), which were edited by Rastell, have "primacy" equally with the version printed from the Cotton MSS. by Bridgett.

simply, "nor shall there be any further fault found in me than that I cannot in every thing think the same way that some other men of more wisdom and deeper learning do." He never, in fact, loses our confidence by seeming to rush upon his fate. In the issues upon which the letter touches he shows, on the contrary, that his views have been formed with all that slow deliberation and strong individuality that Englishmen love and trust and honour.

He is charged, More says, upon three counts—his relations with the Nun, his opinion of the King's marriage, and his views about the Holy See. Of the first he has already said all that there is for him to say. As for the second, he traces in some detail the part, such as it was, which he had played as a privy councillor and with which the reader is already acquainted. There remains, then, the third count. There remains, that is to say, the issue upon which More's conclusions meant so much to him that they cost him his life, yet of which no Englishman can write without being conscious that he is touching upon perhaps the most enduringly controversial question in English or even in universal history. Knowing how fiercely honest and honourable men have differed about the Papacy, no historian, however resolute he is to be fair and however salient as it may seem to him are the facts that he selects to mention, can hope to engage all sympathies or obviate all objections.¹ He may, if he is equal to his work, show his reader what More thought and why More thought it; but, if More's true place in history is to be found, he must discuss the further question whether More was justified in attaching all the importance that he did to the things that he died for. A man is probably a fool who dies for an idle fancy, yet certainly a hero if he dies for a vital fact; and these considerations inevitably condition our

¹ Friedrich von Hügel, in his little-known "Some Notes on the Petrine Claims," seems to me to have dealt as wisely and sympathetically with the issue as anyone can hope to do in a short way.

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estimates, nor does any supposed objectivity in writing afford any way of escape from them. Consciously or unconsciously we have our values always with us.

At some risk of repetition it should be prefaced that to deny the Pope's authority was even in the sixteenth century to dispute the oldest prerogative in Europe. No living monarch held such a prescriptive title to dominion; no unbroken line of Cæsars remained to boast a longer sway. That "presidency in love" over the rest of the churches, with which St. Ignatius of Antioch, the great champion of episcopacy in the early part of the second century, credits the Church of Rome, was already by More's time twice as old as the Eternal City itself when St. Peter, according to a now well-authenticated tradition, first established a Christian community there. Councils such as those of Ephesus and Chalcedon, whose œcumenical character nobody dreams of disputing, had admitted not only without murmur but with enthusiasm this presidency, now by Luther so hotly disputed. And, if the Eastern Patriarchates had at intervals rejected, they had also, as indeed we have seen, at intervals affirmed the Papal supremacy; if the Council of Constance had in its first sessions asserted the superiority of a general council to the Holy See, the Pope had not less solemnly re-asserted the papal view by reconstituting the Council before his resignation; and, if the Isidorian Decretals were not all that had been once supposed, the view of Papal authority which they were intended to enforce was one, at the date of their forgery in France, already in general acceptance. There was nothing in fact in all the long history of the Papacy—neither fact nor legend—that would not in respect of any secular institution be put in evidence by the historian to show how indigenous and evolutionary had been its growth, how organic and structural was its function. To contest its claim to be a legitimate development was, in fact, to call in question the status of all time-honoured in-

stitutions. The English constitution itself, mystic and wonderful as in such hands as Burke's it may be made to appear, had already passed through changes more dubious than those of the Papal authority and the Papal See. The title of the Norman, or, for the matter of that, the Tudor Kings to rule in England can, for instance, be contrasted to their disadvantage with the slow, pacific advance of the Popes to power in Europe; the English Parliament can be presented as a graver innovation upon the Saxon Witanagemot than the grafting of the Sacred College upon the Primitive Church; the Wars of the Roses quoted with as damaging effect against the English Monarchy as the Great Schism against the Papal See. For human infirmity is everywhere to be found, penetrating all institutions and causing the finest political machinery to fail.

More had taken the Papacy so much for granted that he began, as he tells us, by supposing the primacy of the Pope to be a matter of ecclesiastical order, and not of divine institution. This was perhaps the less astonishing that what must have sprung to a diplomatist's eye at the time was the secular side and political activity of the Papal Court. Rome at the height of the Middle Age had contrived, with no little dexterity, to be at least to some extent what, with no little innocence, Geneva lately hoped to make itself—the soul of Western civilisation, the arbiter of international justice, the forcing-house of European morals. But the catholic idea had been gradually obscured by ultramontane considerations; and More had, as we have already seen, taken occasion to warn the King against conceding too much sovereign authority to a ruler so much concerned with temporal power. Yet, when, as a result of Henry's book, he started to review the question for himself, he became convinced, after seven years' patient study, that the truth was other than he had at first supposed. The long chain of witness to the lofty character of the Pope's credentials deeply im-

pressed him; and he found in that consonance and agreement, as he puts it to Cromwell, of "all the holy doctors from St. Ignatius, the disciple of St. John, unto our own days, both Latins and Greeks," a proof sufficient that the primacy of the Pope was provided by God. But in any case the conception of the Church as a visible body postulates, as he saw and indeed says, the presence of a visible head; and, unless in relation to a general council, it did not appear to him to be of any particular consequence to decide whether the head be of God's appointment or the Church's ordering. No single member, it was clear, could venture to dis sever itself from either head or body; and with growing quietness and confidence he makes the point that the King cannot at the same time affect to be appealing to a general council of the Church and anticipate its judgment by denying on his own account the primacy of the Apostolic See. No local church, he means, could repudiate such a time-honoured institution as the Papacy with any show of reason; œcumenical authority at least must be required.

More is arguing, of course, with one who for his own ends had confused the patent issue between Pope and King with the latent one between Pope and Council. He is saying, like a good lawyer who sticks to his brief, that the second question does not arise in the case before him. Yet, since out of this irrelevant issue a charge was being brought against him, he added a word upon a matter which the proceedings of the Council of Constance may have seemed to leave in the air. For, as first constituted by the Anti-Pope John XXIII, the Council had declared itself superior to the Pope, whilst its formal reconstitution by the Pope with the better title—Gregory XII—before he placed his resignation in its hands was in itself an emphatic but not aggressive reminder that no Council was valid without papal authority behind it. The ambiguity which could, though that is not

to say it should, be read into these facts was not dogmatically resolved until 1870, when the place of St. Peter's Chair in the ecclesiastical constitution was defined in terms as remarkable for their moderation as for their lucidity. The specific limitation of Papal inerrancy to *ex cathedra* definitions of faith and morals obviated the objections suggested by the famous cases of Honorius and Liberius, whilst the distinction between the Pope's title to infallibility as a spiritual doctor and his more modest claims as a political ruler appeared clearly by implication.

More had, of course, no such clarification of the subject to go by. He found his way amidst the confusions of the time to the conviction that the Papacy was of divine institution, but, with his best friends, like Fisher and Tunstall, upon the Bench of Bishops, at variance as to the meaning of Papal Supremacy, he could scarcely be expected to think out fully for himself in what precise relation a Pope stood to a General Council of the Church, or what exact significance attached to the resignations and the different manner of them by the three rival Popes at Constance. In default of any formula covering the facts as he saw them, and in face of the King's contention in his recent apologetic that simony in a pope—as is true, if it be proved—invalidates a papal election, and that heresy in a pope, as may be assumed to be true if its occurrence be also assumed to be possible,¹ might entail conciliar action, he adopted what was really a non-committal attitude, on a non-existent issue. "In the next General Council," he observes, "it may well happen that this Pope may be deposed and another substituted in his room with whom the King's highness may be very well content. For, albeit that I have for mine own part such opinion of the Pope's primacy as I have showed you, yet never thought I the Pope above the General Council, nor never have in any book of mine, put forth among the King's

¹ See on this point Bridgett, "Thomas More," p. 348.

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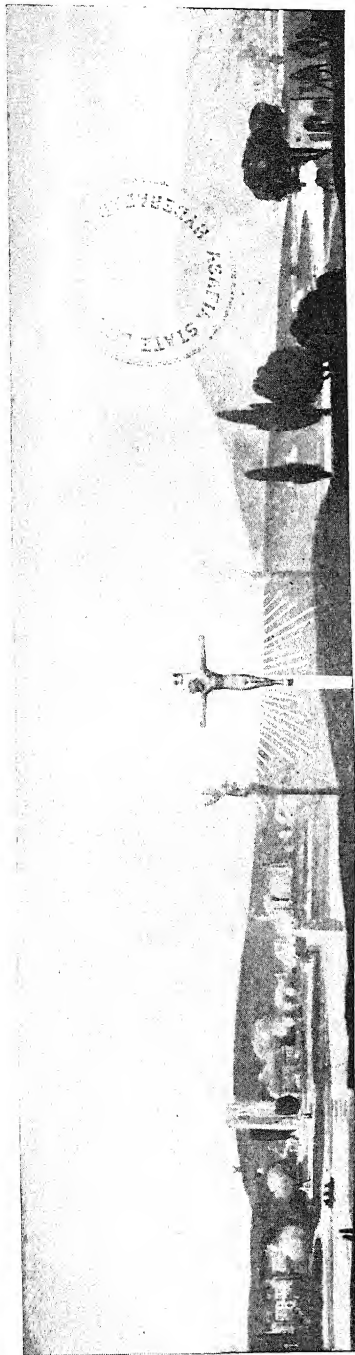
subjects in our vulgar tongue, advanced greatly the Pope's authority. For albeit that a man may, peradventure, so find therein that, after the common manner of all Christian realms, I speak of him as primate, yet never do I stick thereon with reasoning and proving of that point."¹ He stuck in fact, like the wise combatant that he was, to the essential point in peril, holding out, in accordance with Catholic tradition, for the preservation of St. Peter's Chair in its accustomed place in the fabric of the Church. To remove it must, as he saw, be to throw the whole design into so great confusion that neither unity of doctrine nor worship would remain to Christendom. And who will now contend with any show of plausibility that he was wrong?

¹ "Engl. Works," II, 1427.

THE TOWER

IT was on the 6th of March, 1534,¹ that More addressed his letter to Cromwell, and before the month was out two things had pushed him a great way further towards his doom. On the 23rd the Pope determined at last the interminable matter of the King's marriage. Katharine was declared to be a lawful wife, and Henry was required to recognise the verdict on pain of excommunication, and all that it might entail in the loss of his subjects' obedience. But, whilst in Rome the Pope was making this last attempt to vindicate the canon law of Christendom, the King in England was busy demonstrating his plenary power over Church and State. On the 30th of March a Bill settling the succession upon the new Queen's issue received the royal assent, and under its terms Elizabeth became heir presumptive in place of Mary, who indeed was no longer treated as a royal princess. To this Act there was to be required more than the tacit assent that in the general interest we all constantly accord to legislation which perhaps we neither care for nor approve. Royal Commissioners were empowered to tender an oath to all and singular pledging them to "observe, keep, maintain and defend . . . all the whole contents and effects" of the Act in question. Amongst those contents, and figuring large in the preamble, was a recognition of the King's marriage with Katharine as null, of his marriage with Anne as valid—"undoubtful, true, sincere, and perfect" as the uncompromis-

¹ See the MS. copy Cotton MSS. Cleopatra, E. vi, f. 150-152. Printed in Bridgett's "Blessed Thomas More," pp. 343-345.



ALTARPIECE IN THE URQUHART CHAPEL, CAMPION HALL, OXFORD

Dedicated to SS. John Fisher and Thomas More.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RIVERS

Mrs. Pollen's picture, which was designed for the Urquhart Chapel at Campion Hall, Oxford, lately built by Sir Edwin Lutyens, shows, on the left, old Chelsea reconstructed more or less as it was in St. Thomas More's time and then, on the right passes into allegory, the Thames becoming the Jordan and Jerusalem in its mystical significance taking the place of the City of London and Tower Hill. The boat and its figures commemorates the crossing of the River by St. Thomas, with Roper beside him, whilst the Crucifix¹ which stands on the altar in front of the picture breaks in on the scene as if standing at the junction of two worlds.

Reproduced by permission of Mrs. Pollen and of the Master of Campion Hall.

¹ *The Crucifix is the work of Mr. Arthur Pollen.*

ing language put it—and of the authority of Cranmer to decide the issue as sufficient. Such opinions involved, of course, an implicit denial of any jurisdiction in the Pope, who was dismissed as the Bishop of Rome, and whose interference was characterised as abhorrent and detestable.

Easter—the Easter of 1534—passed with its high pomps; and Low Sunday came with its sense of diminished splendour. More and Roper had a fancy on the morning of the latter to go in to the metropolis and hear the sermon at St. Paul's, and, on the way back, took the opportunity of calling at John Clement's house in Bucklersbury, which was the same that More had once occupied. It was there that the King's officer found him and served him with a summons to take the oath next day at Lambeth. He returned to Chelsea on the instant, for his days at home were now numbered.

Roper has his reticences, and of the evening that followed he does not speak; but we know from Stapleton's account that More spent it with his family in the manner of one whose day is over. The sun had, in fact, set for ever upon all that gracious life of his in Chelsea; and he did not look to see it rise again. The advent of a morning clouded by the darkest probabilities saw him, as always on days of great import or decision, on his road to early Mass. He was confessed and took Communion. Then, when the hour was come to leave for Lambeth, he took a short way with the last emotions. His family had been in the habit of walking with him as far as the boat that took him into London and parting affectionately from him at the river bank. But that day they were in tears; and he resolved to prevent the usual practice. So, as they reached the wicket-gate of the house, he pulled it quickly after him and was gone; and only Roper followed him. He had said farewell—a characteristically short farewell—not only to the remnant of his greatness, but to what remained to him of earthly pleasure—to the “beautiful and com-

modious house," on its admirable site—"lugo," as Heywood calls it, "*à meraviglia bello*";¹ to the garden and its flowering shrubs and spreading fruit-trees and tapestries of interwoven boughs, just then coming into leaf and blossom; to the flat-roofed gate-house where he used to sit and ruminate and where he had shown so much quickness of wit in getting rid of a dangerous madman who wanted to throw him from the battlements;² to the little hill, upon which, in soul if not in body, his new academy of friends had stood "tip-toe" to gaze over a delicious prospect of flowing river and green field and rising woodland with London still remotely splendid;³ to the quiet hours of thought that he had passed in the seclusion of library and chapel; to the houses of poor neighbours that he had loved to visit; to the house that he had hired for the old people of the place to end their days in; and, to come back again to the point from which we started, to that open house of his, where the poor would so often come at his invitation to be feasted.⁴ He had shut the door upon it all, and upon the fifty-six years of human life of which his home at Chelsea had been in some sense the crown and the consummation.

The boat pushed out upon the river; and Roper marked his father-in-law's sadness, yet failed to guess its depth or full significance. Only when at length in a whisper More broke the silence did his words, though winged with victory, betray the agony that he had passed through: "Son Roper, I thank Our Lord the field is won." The chill shadows of the valley of decision which was also the valley of death, and whither all that inner life of his had been a long while tending, had fallen suddenly upon his soul as, in the light of the warm⁵

¹ Heywood (Ellis), "*Il Moro*," pp. 1, 14.

² Aubrey's "*Letters*," p. 462.

³ "*Tutta la nobilissima città di Londra*" (Heywood, "*Il Moro*," p. 14).

⁴ Cresacre More, p. 59.

⁵ It was, as More's letter to Margaret Roper shows, a very hot day.

spring morning, the boatmen plied their oars between Chelsea and Lambeth. But Roper answered the remark at the time lamely enough, for he did not properly understand of what he had been witness. Time and reflection were needed before he perceived—to borrow Cresacre's sublimer language—that "the burning love of God" had so wrought in his father-in-law as at this point to conquer all carnal affections utterly.¹

This dark night of the soul had fully passed as the two men reached the further bank of the river and, when they parted, perhaps for the last time,² More seems to have been as calm and collected as ever. No trace of agitation, at all events, appears in the detailed account of his subsequent experiences which he sent to Margaret Roper a day or so later, and which is our authority for what followed. A small crowd of clergy was already waiting to be sworn as he entered the Archbishop's Palace; and he recognised among them Rowland Phillips, the Vicar of Croydon, who had fancied himself so much as prospective Bishop of Utopia. He was surprised to see no laity, but there was perhaps, though he did not know it, a good reason for this. The laity in general seem to have been sworn to a milder, the clergy to a stiffer oath,³ the emphasis desired being laid in the former case upon the goodness of the new Queen's title and in the latter upon the badness of the old papal claims. It was important to get, if possible from one who was both the leading lawyer and the leading layman of his day, an admission, not only of the change in the Succession, but of the religious basis upon which that change rested.

¹ Roper and Cresacre More. I have a little blended the two reports. Roper says "the love he had to God"; Cresacre More "the burning love of God." The latter gives, I think, more accurately what Roper wishes to convey, but a mystic may find no difference, if a union of loves divine and human had been reached.

² Chambers, p. 301.

³ So Bridgett, p. 350, but he gives no authority.

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The Commissioners appointed to administer the oath had been Cranmer and Audley, Norfolk and Suffolk¹—the two greatest officers, in fact, in Church and State and the two greatest noblemen not of royal blood.² Whether Norfolk and Suffolk were present at More's examination is not clear, for there is no mention of them in More's account, and their place may have been taken by Cromwell and by the Abbot of Westminster, who in one capacity or another were certainly there. It is of no great consequence; Cromwell was the man with whom More had to deal.

The ex-Lord Chancellor, as was natural enough, received priority over the clergy. He entered the room where the Commission was sitting, asked to look both at the Oath and the Act, and for a time considered them together. Then, turning to the Commissioners, he said that, whilst he judged no man who swore to either and would himself swear to the appointed order of the Succession, he could not in conscience take the Oath, involving as it did assent to the Act's preamble. Audley replied that they were sorry to hear it; and they all of them added that he was the first to refuse and that his refusal would give the King great provocation. The names of those who had already sworn were then shown him; but he held firmly to his decision, and was presently required to withdraw into the garden. The heat of the day was, however, already great; and rather than face it, he preferred to wait in the cool of an old charred chamber that gave upon that part of the grounds. There, as he looked out, he saw something to amuse him. Hugh Latimer, all but a bishop now, came into the garden with various divines—doctors and chaplains to the Archbishop—and was very jolly with them, laughing and throwing his arm in so friendly a fashion about the necks of one or two that, as More declares, had they been women, one might have thought him wanton.

¹ Froude, II, p. 225.

² See "Venetian Calendar, 1527-1533," p. 294.

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Presently there arrived Dr. Nicolas Wilson, one of Cranmer's chaplains, who had evidently been under examination by the Commissioners, and together with him two gentlemen who had apparently come to Lambeth in More's boat; and these three were, then, though with marks of civility, embarked for the Tower. There is nothing in More's account explicitly to connect Latimer's good spirits with Wilson's ominous expedition, except only, as we know from other sources, that the two had crossed swords at Bristol, and that Latimer was urgent for the strenuous application of the oath.¹ Yet it seems clear that More's keen eye was missing nothing.

Meanwhile the Commissioners were swearing the London priests, inclusive of the Vicar of Croydon, who, as the spectator saw, resorted "either for gladness or for dryness or else that it might be seen that he was known to the high-priest," to the buttery bar and had a good drink there. So soon, however, as the priests had "played their pageant" and were gone, More was recalled and told, as a fresh reason for submission, of the number of clergy who had been sworn since he was last in the room. He continued, however, inflexible, still blaming no man for swearing, but himself refusing to do so. Again they told him he was obstinate, and complained that he did not specify to what he objected in the oath. He replied that he had no wish further to offend the King, as he must do by giving his reasons. They repeated that he was stubborn and obstinate, until at length he expressed his readiness, if the King gave him licence by letters patent, to declare his objections in writing and, furthermore, if his objections were answered to his satisfaction, to take the oath. Letters patent, however, the Commissioners made it clear, would afford him no sort of protection against the Statute. Upon which More replied that, if these were granted, he would trust to the King's honour for the rest; but at the same time

¹ "D.N.B.," and "Latimer's Remains" (Parker Soc.), II, p. 367.

that he saw no obstinacy in refusing to give his reasons if they were to be used against him. It was at this point that Cranmer intervened with a characteristically disingenuous yet ingenious and well-meant suggestion. Since upon this issue he did not condemn others, More—so the Archbishop argued—could not really feel sure about it himself, whilst at the same time he was, of course, sure of its being his duty to obey the King. Was he not bound, then, to prefer the sure course to the unsure? The subtlety of this sudden suggestion made More, according to his own account, rather inarticulate. He could only say—but perhaps it was all that was needed—that the case was one of those in which, whatever others might do, he was not bound to obey his sovereign. He had, he told the Commissioners, informed his conscience upon the matter not suddenly or slightly, but with long leisure and diligent search. If, however, Cranmer's argument was good, it opened a short way to an avoidance of all perplexities; for, as he added with a touch of sarcasm, all the doubts of the doctors would be solved by the commandment of the King.

The Archbishop of Canterbury failing to persuade More to place his conscience in the hands of the monarch, the Abbot of Westminster substituted as an alternative the voice of the people, or at least its voice as modulated to suit the monarch's ear. Abbot Benson, who, there is some reason to suppose, in view of certain financial transactions of his with Cromwell,¹ had lately bought himself into his preferment, held apparently that the mind of Parliament under Cromwell's guidance moved in harmony with the mind of God. Had not More occasion, he inquired, to "change his conscience" when he saw that the great Council of the realm was of another opinion? More replied, with all his usual modesty, that were he leaning to one side by himself with all the weight of Parliament leaning to the other, he would be

¹ "D.N.B."

very uneasy about the rectitude of his judgment. "But," he continued, "if it so be that in some things for which I refuse the Oath, I have, as I think I have, upon my part as great a council, and a greater too, I am not then bound to change my conscience and conform it to the Council of one realm against the General Council of Christendom."

It was in its way an unanswerable answer; and the Italianate Englishman into whose hands English destinies had passed was thrown back upon crude hypocrisy to meet it. As one that "tenderly favoured" the examinee, Cromwell swore with a great oath that he had sooner his own son had lost his head than that More had refused to swear. The King, he added, would now conceive a great suspicion of Sir Thomas and think him at the back of the Nun of Kent's conspiracy. More replied simply that the contrary was the truth, and well known to be so, and that he could not help what might happen unless he were to put his soul in peril. Audley thereupon rehearsed the terms of the refusal which it was Cromwell's business to deliver to the King. Consent to take a naked oath to the Succession was indicated or implied; and More was therefore at pains to make it clear that the oath must be so framed as to agree with his conscience. The Chancellor bade Cromwell note the reservation; and this led More on to define his attitude beyond doubt or dispute. He saw, he said, no difficulty in swearing to the Succession, yet at the same time it was but reasonable he should see first in what manner the oath was drawn. He criticised no man's conscience, but must retain full possession of his own.

There was nothing further to be said; and, when Cromwell went to the King, More passed into the keeping of the Abbot. For four days, whilst he hung, so to speak, between prison and private house, King and Council debated what they should do with him, whose oath, could they have obtained it, would have done so much to ease an anxious situation. Cranmer

was for the compromise, which More had offered. Let the question of the Pope's and of Katharine's status be shelved, let More and Fisher be sworn to the succession of Anne's children, and under the influence of these mutual concessions the whole realm might, in his view, be once more united. It was wise counsel, and should, as Mr. Herbert Fisher says, have been followed. But Henry was either not statesman enough to take it or else not man enough to resist the pressure from Anne that drove him forward continually towards his old friend's destruction. If More, he maintained, were let off easily, the country might conclude that Anne was not quite a queen or Rome not quite repudiated. Cromwell was, accordingly, instructed to answer Cranmer in the negative; and the championship of private conscience thus passed into More's care no less than the championship of the unity of the Church.

To such a pass had Anne's exalted schemes coupled with Cromwell's cool calculations brought the affairs of a kingdom not otherwise, as nations go, than pious and not otherwise, as things were, than free. Meanwhile an uncanny intuition or preternatural shrewdness had already told her future victim where the Queen's lawless ways would lead her. It was soon after his imprisonment began that More inquired of his daughter how Anne was getting on. "In faith, father," Margaret Roper replied, "never better." "Never better!" he returned. "Alas, Meg, it pitieth me to remember into what misery, poor soul, she shall shortly come." The Bluebeard's tale of Henry's essays in matrimony was indeed on the point of starting; and the language of the old story needs but a little change to serve the *macabre* situation. "Mistress Anne, Mistress Anne, do you see anything coming?"

It must have been about a month before the date of his prophecy, and actually on the 17th of April, 1534, that More had been brought from Westminster by river, and with no

less poetry than Childe Roland when he came to the dark Tower had come himself to the White one. At the gate of the fortress the Porter, presumably according to custom, asked the prisoner for his upper garment, whereupon More tendered his cap, which was the precise thing the man had demanded, though not at all the thing that he desired to have. To Prof. Chambers and Mr. Hollis this appears so poor a jest that they treat it as evidence of failing spirits in its maker; and certainly it is no joke to play off upon distinguished scholars. But the Porter might have been perplexed by more elaborate witticisms, and most probably liked it well enough, especially as, for anything we know, he may have obtained the coat and the cap also. The incident, at all events, whatever mood we read into More's mind, is in full keeping with a character so human as to love wisdom only a little more than folly and common people quite as much as learned men. He who was to give a quip to the headsman as he left the Tower may well be excused for girding at the porter with a quirk as he entered it. Like the new model of an English gentleman that he was perhaps a little making, he knew at every turn how to mark his keener sense of the seriousness of life with a gentle levity that even the light might envy. "Thrust me out of your doors, Master Lieutenant," he told his old friend, Sir Edmund Walsingham, who came to apologise to him for his poor quarters in the Tower, "if I mislike my cheer." Yet there was much doubtless to apologise for in the accommodation of the Bell and Beauchamp Towers, where he is said to have been confined, and more in respect of capricious regulations which compelled him to write his letters with a coal and even appear to have refused him the consolation of attending Mass.¹ His wife, on one of the seemingly not-too-frequent occasions when she visited him, depicts his room as a close, filthy place infested with rats and mice, but, understand-

¹ Bridgett, "Life of More," p. 368.

ing less than ever what manner of man she had married and wishing him home at Chelsea at whatever cost in honour, she was not, doubtless, likely to have made the best of his circumstances. As usual, he enjoyed her limitations—inquiring cheerily whether his new quarters were not as near to heaven as his former ones, and reminding her ruthlessly that, were he but seven years buried, he might return to find his fair house in other hands and to be himself turned away from the door as a stranger. Her exhibitions or affectations of claustrophobia, if the tale that he tells in his "Dialogue of Comfort" was, as is plausibly supposed, based upon her speeches, gave him also no little entertainment. He was vastly amused to hear her declare that the stuffiness of his cell, when the door was locked at night, would have stifled her—she who, as he knew, could not for the life of her bear to have door or window open in her bedroom all the night through. In point of fact, the problem was quite as much how to keep cold air out of his chamber as to get fresh air into it, since More was already suffering from infirmities of one kind and another—gravel, stone, pain in the chest as a result, it seems, of much writing, and cramp that would seize upon his legs at night. He seems, however, to have made the place habitably warm with mats of straw. It was, in fact, as he observed to his daughter at the time, less narrow than what he would have chosen for himself, if he had not had to think of a wife and children.¹ For the Carthusian romance still ruled his imagination.

From his first coming to the Tower the prisoner was indeed moving even more plainly than before in the world less of nature than of grace. "Of worldly things I no more desire than I have," he wrote with the coal that did duty for a pen. And to his great contentment, no desire of vengeance, no love of life remained to trouble the serenity of his soul. "I thank Our Lord," he writes to Margaret Roper, "I know no

¹ Cresacre More, p. 239.

person living that I would had one fillip for my sake; of which mind I am more glad that of all the world beside. As for long life I neither look for nor long for (it), but am well content to go, if God call me hence to morrow." And his conversation as reported by his daughter struck the same note. "Methinks God by this imprisonment maketh me one of his wantons and setteth me upon his lap and dandleth me, even as He hath done all his best friends, St. John Baptist, St. Peter, St. Paul . . . and his most especial favourites."¹

The field of spiritual combat had indeed been decisively won in the short, sharp engagement on the water between Chelsea and Lambeth. Only some spectral fear remained that he might be unequal to the test, if torture were applied—be led into temptation and yet not delivered from the evil of taking the oath. "Which I trust Our Lord shall never suffer," he adds, however, in answering some ill-judged congratulations upon a report that he had submitted and so brought his troubles to a close.

More's calmness and constancy were so much the more wonderful that he was getting so little support even in quarters where he had most right to look for it. From Lady More's standpoint his defiance of convention appeared, of course, insanity; and we may detect, perhaps, somewhat similar dispositions in the handling of her step-father's case by Lady Alington—Lady More's daughter, that is, by an earlier marriage. An extant letter from this lady to Margaret Roper shows more obviously, however, the cynicism that More's friends had to face in the King's most prominent councillors. Audley had come over to the Alingtons from his son-in-law, Sir Thomas Barneston's² place in Suffolk in the hope of killing a buck, which he successfully accomplished; and, perhaps elated with this achievement, he cordially invited Lady Alington, as he left, to visit him on the following day. She went, resolved to put in a timely word

¹ Cresacre More, p. 240.

² Or Barnardiston.

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for her step-father, and, choosing her opportunity with care in the course of the conversation, besought the Lord Chancellor to be "still good lord" to his predecessor. Audley answered that whilst he would do as much for More as for his own father, as might be seen from his conduct in the affair of the Nun, More was showing himself really too obstinate in holding out about the oath, when every one except the "blind Bishop"¹ had given in. And then, after the manner of Wolsey, he pointed the moral of the wise men in the story who kept out of the rain for fear the wet should make fools of them, and then found the fools so numerous that their wisdom went for nothing and they became the ruled and not the rulers. He laughed merrily as he finished the fable, but Lady Alington was not to be put off, and repeated her request. Upon which he replied again that he would have her step-father less scrupulous and, therewith, produced another and more striking parable. A Lion, he said, and an Ass and a Wolf all went to confession. And the Lion accused himself of having eaten all the beasts he could get hold of; but the confessor excused him both because he was a king and because in his act he had followed his nature. The Ass in his turn accused himself of having in hunger eaten one straw from a shoe, whereby he feared that his master, who owned the shoe, had caught a cold; and this time the confessor thought the sin too considerable for anything less than episcopal absolution, and sent him off to the bishop. Then came the Wolf, and was commanded for his penance to spend no more than sixpence upon a meal. He did this for a time, but presently, finding the sum insufficient, and perceiving a cow and her calf in his way, conceived the idea of estimating the value of the cow at a groat and of the calf at the half of it, and thus contrived to devour them both with a good conscience.

¹ Fisher.

Freedom of speech sometimes has to take cover, but never wholly dies. Audley with his simple fable had said as much as if he had called the King ferocious, More a simpleton, and Cromwell a rogue and a robber outright. Doubtless, had the matter ever come to the King's ears, he would either have given the fable another meaning or denied having ever told it. Pliable, acquisitive, cynical and clear-sighted, he had his reward in this world and presumably his reminiscences in the next.

Better men than Audley, however, thought much as he did about More's matter. Tunstall and Gardiner, not less than the rest of the Episcopate—Fisher always excepted—were managing to follow the King whither as yet they knew not, but were, themselves in prison, to know thereafter. And men, "great, wise and well learned," as Margaret Roper warned her father, viewed his continued refusal to swear as a blot upon his good sense and even as a peril to his soul. His very Fool thought him a fool. And Meg herself, though Rastell maintains, most unconvincingly, that her attitude was but a subterfuge to persuade Cromwell to let her see her father, was throwing all her weight upon the side of submission. Time and again, after she was allowed to come to him, she pressed him to yield in her great wish to save him; and time and again he repelled her entreaties, calling her Mistress Eve and Lady Alington the Serpent. Yet the struggle with her sharpened his sufferings to the uttermost, for he feared for her and his family what he did not fear for himself. "A deadly grief unto me, and much more deadly than to hear of mine own death," he had written to her after her first assault, "is that I perceive my good son, your husband, and you, my good daughter, and my good wife, and mine other good children and innocent friends in great displeasure and danger of great harm thereby . . . I can no further, but commit all to God."

Even still, maybe, though it is all four hundred years ago, the words can touch the mind with mortal sorrow, so

burdened are they, for all their simplicity, with pathos, so winged with affection, so feathered with distress. Tragedies enough as there are to give us pause on every page of the long tale, it is not easy to think in English history of another where the circumstances are so poignant, the suffering so free from blame, and the sentiment so gracious, charming, authentic and detailed. We can see the father and daughter, if we choose, no less clearly than we see Lear and Cordelia, sitting alone "like birds in the cage," praying and repeating, as we know they did, the immemorial laments of the Hebrew Psalmist, and telling old tales, and making merry over gilded butterflies, and talking Court news, and taking upon them the mystery of things, like God's spies, in a wall'd prison. And beside the conversation-picture thus conjured up by the magic of the family letters there appears in the "Dialogue of Comfort" and in the "Treatise on the Passion" a piece of undesigned self-portraiture in which the face of the inner man, now lined by time, and lit with supersensual light, stands out, with a sort of Rembrandtesque effect, against a dark background of shadow—of the shadow of death.

Conceived as a conversation between a Hungarian noble and his nephew, dwellers alike upon the eastern confines of Christendom, this last "Dialogue" starts from the premise that the comfort commonly given to sick men in the form of hopes of recovery does more harm than good, and is, in fact, so far as old men are concerned, a sort of insanity, diverting their minds from the consideration of another world to dubious expectations of some few more days in this one. Antony, the uncle, is the more sensible of this, that he is suffering from an internal complaint that gives him a good deal of pain. "A fond old man," to borrow his own description of himself, "often as full of words as a woman," he has, though still as he declares more than half a "gigglet",¹ little left him now but

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1171.

"the lust of an old fool's life to sit well and warm with a cup and a roasted crab, and drivel, and drink, and talk";¹ and it is in these conditions that he discusses the problem of pain with his devoted nephew, Vincent, who has long looked to him for moral guidance, and is now heavy with apprehension at the prospect of his death. Antony bids his cousin, as he calls him, turn elsewhere for consolation; but Vincent replies that to look to God alone, which is Antony's meaning, is not enough for him, that he needs human teachers, and that, knowing none like Antony, he thinks God would approve his purpose in seeking out and storing up Antony's counsels. The times, he pleads, are full of trouble; Belgrade and Rhodes have fallen to the Turks; and the Turks still press forward. Let his uncle afford him some comfort in tribulation. The site and circumstance of the "Dialogue," though the point must not be pressed, were conceivably intended to carry the eye out to that truly Catholic horizon where, given Turkish reciprocity, the European obligation of maintaining a common defensive Christian front merged in the duty of meeting pagan opposition without violence and in full and free discussion.²

Under pressure from Vincent, Antony consents to say what he can. The consolations of philosophy, he premises, despite all the long labour of the philosophers to show that the mind should not be distressed when body and spirit are in pain, remain in his view insufficient. And the cause of this failure lies, he declares, in their neglect, for lack of knowledge of "the special point which is . . . the chief comfort of all." They possess, indeed, certain good drugs and mix certain good medicines, yet, in face of the mortal sickness of mankind, it is necessary to get at the good physician upon whose prescriptions these apothecaries really depend.

Faith is the first condition here of cure. We must put

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1169.

² Cp. *ibid.*, p. 275.

ourselves unreservedly into the physician's hands. For despondent patients, irritable patients, and patients who seek remedy in worldly alleviations are not susceptible of treatment. Men must long to be comforted of God, and take no short cuts to relief from tribulation. For it can become, as in St. Paul's case, the remedy for disease; and to ask unreservedly and precisely for deliverance from pain may be to pray against cure of sickness. Not physical ease, but divine aid, is to be sought!

All tribulation can, in fact, be medicine if we will take it as such, or become medicine if we will make it so, or be better than medicine if, forsaking comfort, we embrace it. It is medicine if it comes as a punishment, as when a gluttonous man falls sick, and is thereby stopped from sinning. It becomes medicine as when God thrice refused to remove a thorn in the flesh from the Apostle lest pride should have the upper hand, or as when "God seeth a storm come toward a young, lovely lady that would, if her health and her fat feeding should a little longer last, strike her into some lecherous love and instead of her old acquainted knight lay her abed with a new acquainted knave. But God loveth her more tenderly than to suffer her (to) fall into such shameful beastly sin, (and) sendeth her in season a goodly fair fervent fever that . . . wasteth away her wanton flesh." Tribulation, however, is better than medicine when, not as a punishment or preventive, it strikes an innocent man like Job, and he takes it patiently, maintains his faith in God, and causes all his pain to turn to glory. Tribulation, if it serves in hell for nothing but punishment and in purgatory for nothing but purification, is thus in this present world rich with rewards and merits.

A lot of people, objects Vincent, call some of these things in question, and the comfort we draw from them must be vain, if their critics are correct. "Cousin," observes Uncle

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Antony gently, "if some things were as they be not, then should some things be as they are not." The elder man expresses himself, however, anxious to avoid all controversy and contention, and so much the more that at the moment there seems to be some hope of seeing Christians make common cause against the Turks. Therefore, if he continues to believe, with all the corps of Christendom for many hundred years past, that there is a purgatory, those who deny it must "of their courtesy" hold his fears excused. "And," he adds kindly, "I beseech Our Lord heartily for them that, when they depart out of this wretched world, they find no purgatory at all, so God keep them from hell." As for the argument for justification by faith alone, they are few who have not a little changed their view in this matter and are not now so far agreed with their opponents that the one party recognise that no good work merits a heavenly reward of itself without faith and the other acknowledge that, given time and strength, men are under obligation to do good works. This being so, he does not want to enter into further controversy with those who maintain that the reward is the result of faith issuing in good works rather than, as he would himself put it, of faith operating in conjunction with charity. All that his present purpose necessitates is that tribulation or martyrdom, if suffered for the faith of Christ, should be held to have such high merit that high comfort attends on it.

Continuous prosperity, Antony proceeds to say, is to those who have appreciated the fact that this world is no abiding city, and look after 'our little while wandering' here to find another and a better, a cause of deep anxiety, since they perceive tribulation to be needful to us.

At this point Vincent puts the forcible objection that clever men who ought to know what they are talking about are in the habit of reassuring the powerful that they can have

the best of both worlds. Antony does not dispute this, though, as he says, no very wise or good man would so do. But we have to reckon in such cases sometimes with the personal interest of the speaker who fears to lose his stipend, and sometimes with his disinclination to speak the truth from absolute despair of getting powerful and prosperous men to exchange their accustomed pleasures for prayer and fasting. Nevertheless, pursues Vincent with all the keen logic of youth, it is not only such time-servers as his uncle mentions, but the Church itself, in the collects that it offers for the perpetual health and prosperity of princes and prelates, which seems to belie belief in any such defence of tribulation as Antony has put forward. We ought, if perpetual prosperity is a curse, to say to our suffering acquaintance, "I am glad, good gossip, that you be so sick. I pray God keep you long therein." And, besides, Abraham and Solomon were rich and well-beloved of God; and God gave back to Job the double of his former riches.

Antony rejoins that he had no intention of saying that worldly prosperity was always displeasing to God or tribulation eternally wholesome to men. For, if God should give the goods of this world only to bad men, people would suppose that God was not lord of it. But equally, if God gave its goods only to good men, people would serve Him just for the sake of them. Wealth or tribulation can, in fact, become the subject either of vice or virtue. But the point at issue between him and Vincent is really, he argues, whether continual wealth in this world without any tribulation is or is not a sign of God's anger. Pain, his nephew must remember, can affect both mind and body; and mental pain can even be more acute than physical distress. Many good men consequently suffer much, though their grief passes unnoticed. The tribulation of temptation, though no trouble to such as surrender to it without a scruple, is a great trouble to the

conscientious; and these would gladly give the half or more of their goods to be free from it. Let anyone who is unconvinced of this imagine himself afflicted with a fervent longing for something which he cannot, or for conscience' sake will not, get, such as to have his pleasure of a good woman; and he may then understand how all the other pleasures at his command might not seem worth a pin's fee. For the pain here of resisting temptation and fear of falling into it may be anguish and a great interruption of prosperity. Thus, in view of so many kinds of tribulation, the Church, which, moreover, never ceases to inculcate the mortification of the flesh, must not be supposed to contemplate any man's living in continuous prosperity or to pray for such a thing. Nor can the stories of Solomon and Job be called in evidence on the other side. The favour which the former enjoyed in the sight of God seems to have been anterior to the period of his many and outlandish marriages; nor have we any assurance that his riches brought him peace at the last. As for Job, his prosperity, if great, was certainly discontinuous. Vincent has a stronger case in Abraham, and a point so much the more telling that it is in this rich man's bosom that the poor man Lazarus finds comfort after death. Yet on a closer view Abraham will be seen to have had his tribulations. His call to leave his own country, his lack for so many years of a son by Sarah, his anguish at being required to sacrifice the child of promise when at length it appeared—these, and other things also, discover sufferings obediently accepted and patiently endured. Tribulation, in short, is needful to all men; and no one enforces the fact more plainly than the Abraham of the New Testament parable. Dives is not specially wicked, nor Lazarus specially good; but Dives has chosen to have his good things in this world, and Lazarus has had his tribulations. Hence the latter is comforted for his suffering, and the former tormented for his indifference to it.

Vincent is impressed, but not fully convinced by this reasoning. If tribulation is so salutary, it would appear unreasonable to try to put a stop to it. Antony replies that it is as much our duty to relieve pain as to suffer it, God enjoining both, and man having no need to rack his brains to reconcile these opposing injunctions. For a man must pity his neighbour's body, which he sees now, or else he will never pity his neighbour's soul, which he sees not yet. God, however, has the care of both in view; and tribulation of body may bring health of spirit. Sickness makes a man reflect "how he must leave all this worldly wealth within a while behind here in this world, and walk hence alone he wotteth not whither, nor how soon he shall take his journey thither, nor can tell what company he shall meet there. And then beginneth he to think that it were good to make sure and to be merry, so that he be wise therewith, lest there hap to be such black bugs indeed as folk call devils whose torments he was wont to take for Poets' tales."¹

Antony pursues his thought with forcible realism. Lying "panting in his bed as it were on a pine bank," the sick man is drawn to imagination of hell by the action of the devil, and finds himself no longer able to take it as fable. Yet he turns the more fervently to his own fond fancies to drive away these haunting visions. "Some have I seen," Antony declares, "even in their last sickness set up in their death-bed underpropped with pillows, take their play-fellows to them and comfort themselves with cards; and this, they said, did ease them well to put fantasies out of their heads. And what fantasies trow you? Such as I told you right now, of their own lewd life and peril of their soul, of heaven and of hell that irked them to think of, and therefore cast it out with card-play as long as ever they might, till the pure pangs of death pulled their heart from their play and

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1161.

put them in the case they could not reckon their game. And then left them their gamesters¹ and sliily slunk away, and long was it not ere they gave² up the ghost. And what game they came to then,³ that God knoweth and not I."⁴

Vincent, so he says, likes his uncle's argument well, but a doubt remains with him. Were not prosperity and tribulation, on this showing, upon an equality, and was not thanksgiving for the former as meritorious as patience in the latter? Antony's reply proceeds on the assumption that, however much their conduct may at times belie it, men in their heart of hearts believe that no soul of man should rest content to sit at ease, but rather gird itself, whilst on earth, for battle. He finds no word of Christ promising another world's consolations to thanksgiving for this world's comforts; he recalls the words of the Preacher that it is better to be in the house of heaviness than of mirth, and the words of the philosopher that virtue stands in things of hardness and difficulty; and he insists that the very essence of a rich man's merit in giving, however little this may appear where his means are large and the amount given relatively slight, lies in the fact that, to however small an extent it may be, he has exchanged wealth for tribulation. The conclusion of the whole matter is that, where men are making with all their might for God, tribulation forms an essential part of training—a gracious gift, specially given to God's special friends.

With that affirmation of belief in mortal life as much less than a half-told tale, the problem of pain falls for a time out of view, and the "Dialogue of Comfort" enters upon certain more or less relevant digressions. The collocutors speak successively of penance,⁵ temptation,⁶ pusillanimity,⁷ scrupulosity,⁸ suicide,⁹ spiritualism,¹⁰ and of the devil that walketh in dark-

¹ "Gameners" in the original.

² "Galped" in the original.

³ In the original these words are reversed, viz. "then to."

⁴ Engl. Works, p. 1162.

⁵ Bk. II, c. 6.

⁶ Ch. 9-12.

⁷ Ch. 13.

⁸ Ch. 14.

⁹ Ch. 15.

¹⁰ Ch. 16.

ness, and not only in the darkness of night, but of the twilight before the dawn of grace and the twilight after grace is gone.¹ These topics give play to More's shrewd regard for realities, as, for instance, in the observation that people will give a preacher attentive hearing so long as he speaks of hell, but will grow sleepy if he tells them about heaven, so that if the dread of hell were gone it is likely the fear of God might perish with it. But it is only when he comes in the third book to speak of the devil in the noon-day that the "Dialogue" recovers its march and resumes its relation to his immediate circumstances.

The devil of the midday, as More conceives him, is the Tempter massing his manoeuvres. Allurements of rest and quiet are associated with threats of death and torture, so as to concentrate against a soul in one single attack all the forces of pleasure and pain. The collocutors assume the possibility of a triumph of the Turks and of being confronted by a choice between apostacy or the loss of all things temporal—fortune, lands, possessions, honour, life—and as an illustration of how much such things may count to a man, an unmistakable vignette of Wolsey is here inset. "Glorious was he very far above all measure, and that was great pity, for it did harm and made him abuse many great gifts that God had given him."² "Never . . . satiate of hearing his own praise," the great man is depicted as inviting opinions of an oration he has just made. A flood of flattery is let loose, and rises higher and higher, until at length, when it comes to the turn of a certain distinguished churchman whose rank was next that of the prelate, and who was in consequence expected to speak last, no words seemed left. The wily old flatterer, however, proved equal to the occasion. Holding up his hands and throwing up his eyes to heaven,

¹ Ch. 17.

² Engl. Works, p. 1221.

he sighed deeply, and afterwards fell to weeping. And it seemed that he had surpassed them all in his compliments.

Vincent tells the story in the character of an eye-witness; and it is left to Antony to point the moral. Such people as Vincent describes make true men of fools and mad. But Vincent has seen too much of the anonymous prelate to doubt what greed of praise lay there; and tells how an experienced diplomatist of his acquaintance had put the great man in a great rage, and been called "a very fool" for criticising a state paper submitted to that person for an honest opinion. So much do men love to be deferred to! But Antony sees eminence as no more than a little brief authority and nothing desirable in itself.

The conversation passes on to consider riches and honour. The good old man finds them wanting, "things indifferent," more likely to lead men's souls into temptation than to afford their bodies any commodity. But the young cynic observes that though what his uncle says is true enough, men will never confess that they desire riches and honour for their own worldly pleasure, but will pretend it is all for the public good. Antony does not dispute it, but replies that God is not mocked, and that persecution by the infidel will try their sincerity in this matter like a touchstone. Yet even worldly prudence would discourage an exchange of infidelity against immunity of goods when one is dealing with such a cheat as a sultan; whilst, on the other hand, the evangelical counsels show that a man secures his treasure best by pouring it into poor men's bosoms. To give riches to the poor is to entrust them to Christ Himself.

True as these things are, Vincent observes that "yet ever there hangeth in a man's heart a lothness to lack a living." Antony acknowledges it; but this is because the brambles of worldly wealth strangle the words of God. If our treasure were in heaven, our hearts would be there likewise, and no torment could touch us. Deeply to reflect upon Christ's

poverty should be enough "to make any kind Christian, man or woman, well content to give up all that ever God hath lent them . . . than unkindly . . . forsake Him."

The speakers pass on from loss of goods to physical suffering under persecution. Vincent confesses his fears of falling; but Antony declares that he should not on that account be excessively afraid beforehand. In persecution the fearful tend to stand, the fearless sometimes fail. He considers in turn the three outstanding features of persecution—captivity, imprisonment, and a shameful death. What does passing into captivity matter to those who seek but have not yet found their country, or imprisonment to men who are all such prisoners of circumstances that a beggar may well appear more free than a king?

Vincent, however, dismisses this latter argument as "a sophistical fantasy." As he sees things, only those commonly called prisoners are in any prison at all.

That might seem to be so to Vincent's mind, replies Antony, yet to his own mind what he had urged had long appeared no sophistical fancy, but very substantial truth. And he asks Vincent to imagine a man condemned to execution, yet permitted to do anything or go anywhere, subject only to the absence of any way or hope of escape. Is he no prisoner, or less a prisoner than one who, without danger of death, is put in a dungeon? Vincent recognises a prisoner here, and a prisoner, moreover, even more conclusively than most, by reason of his irreversible sentence. It is their own case, observes Antony. The Human Race comes into this world, under sentence of death, roams over it at will, yet has never hope of any remission of judgment. Vincent admits the force of the analogy, but makes the point that the supposed prisoner in the dungeon is so far as that goes as mortal as the vagrant. Antony replies that this is well objected, yet does not allow that the objection holds. The

supposition in the argument is only that one prisoner is sentenced to death and the other not, and, so regarded, a man with the whole world before him may seem more really a captive than a man in a cell. God is, in fact, our gaoler, and we are His prisoners. He constrains us with invisible instruments as other gaolers do with visible. Fevers, megrims, quinsies, palsies, gout, cramp, cricks in the back rack us as a gaoler's irons gall his charges. Our mistake lies in supposing ourselves more free than we are and imprisonment a rarer thing than it is. And on this showing to have a door shut upon us, or less room to walk in, are matters of such slight consequence as hardly to deserve a thought, and so much the less that the Carthusians, the Brigittines and the Clares seek them of their own accord.

The final consolation of a painful and a shameful death remains to be considered. "Indeed," as Antony says, when Vincent brings it up, "in this point is the sore pinch." Even without pain or shame some men are loth to die—the sceptics because they think there is no other life, and do not therefore like leaving this one; the lewd because they have little cause to hope for salvation; the worldings because, like the snail who from sheer domesticity refused Jupiter's invitation to a feast of the gods and was saddled evermore with her house in consequence, they love the world so well that they would like to carry it always about with them. Not, however, to such, but to those who, if it were not for shame and pain, would face death cheerfully, does Vincent ask his uncle to minister comfort. Antony replies that, as regards the shame, those condemned to die for Christianity should see themselves as men passing down a broad street, on the one side of which stands a railing rabble, and on the other a great company of wise and worshipful men commending them for their conduct. And as for the pain, if reason can persuade a man, as it clearly can, to accept a measure of suffering for the sake of physical

commodity or cure, must not faith be able to do as much when the outcome is eternal and celestial life? It is our imagination which fails us in regard to celestial things even more than it fails us in regard to things infernal. A gleam of it, and we should be so constrained by the love of Christ that the prospect of the beatific vision must assume dominion over us who for love of women will die twice over and for love of country suffer mortal pain.

Concluding as it does on this note, the "Dialogue" may be reasonably assumed to have preceded those treatises on the Eucharist and the Passion which were certainly written in the same year and the same circumstances. The mystical life of man, as Thomas à Kempis had already said with his usual directness and simplicity, requires for its sustenance both food and light—sacramental food and scriptural illumination; and More's two final treatises respond to these requirements. The last word for him as he looks his last upon life is a considered, convinced, confident assertion that the soul cannot be adequately fed upon unsubstantial things—signs or figures or tokens, as the modernists of the time proposed—but only upon "the selfsame precious body of Christ that suffered his bitter passion."¹ From that position, gravitationally central as he knows it to be for the Catholic, his thought, like an eye adding its own gift of tears to the tears of human things, resolves the strange radiance of the Passion into prismatic hues and bridges the whole field of history with the resulting arc. In a prose growing in majesty as it goes, he moves, as we have already had occasion to see, the theme of "Paradise Lost" and Heaven potentially regained. Lucifer, an angel in the first instance "of excellent brightness," falls, in his pride, from heaven, bringing darkness to the earth instead of light. Man, epitomising, as we should put it now, a vast evolution, sharing, as

¹ A "Treatise to Receive the Blessed Body of Our Lord" (Engl. Works, p. 1266).

More points out, with minerals existence, with vegetables life, with animals sensibility, with angels rational understanding,¹ comes upon the scene, a creature, not, as we see him now, inwardly disordered, but at one with himself and circumstance because at one with God; his sensual parts held in subjection to his reason by that divine communion; his being conditioned by the prospect of the Beatific Vision; and his body thereby rendered capable of translation without suffering from terrestrial to celestial happiness. He falls, however, being free; and great is the fall of him and of his partner in temptation. "For scarce was the fruit passed down both their throats when it so began to wamble in their stomachs that they wished it out again and in his belly that counselled them to eat it. For each was there such a marvellous change spread through both their bodies that, whereas when they put it in their mouth they were such as it was a great pleasure each of them to behold other and be beheld of the other, as soon as they both had eaten it they felt such filthy motions of concupiscence rise and rebel against reason in their flesh that their hearts abhorred to be beholden and seen, either of any other or themselves either, and for shame of their nakedness covered their flesh with fig leaves."²

The quaint flavour of the English in this passage should not dull our perception to the fact that the occurrence of some "marvellous change" in human nature is embedded in the structure of More's thought, as indeed in the whole Catholic argument. That Man all the world over is doing the things that he would not and failing to do the things that he would; that reason, though not formally repudiated, is never fully enthroned, are for More indispensable, primary facts, conditioning all our thoughts about mankind, as well political as religious, and demanding of us the most earnest reflection. He is himself satisfied that the explanation of

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1274.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1274.

them is to be found in the existence originally of two states, perfectly harmonised and equally proper to man, the one arising in the natural order, the other coming of divine endowment, and in the disruption of this relationship through sin. Man through the state of nature, even though his body was "of nature dissoluble and mortal as the bodies of other beasts be,"¹ held already within his being an immortal soul, and with it the promise of "a life good, quiet and restful with spiritual delight in such knowledge of God and his wonderful works as reason at the least without revelation might attain unto."² Born free for his own honour and comfort, yet still dependent upon grace to keep him from pride, Man, More argues, would have stood in still greater peril of sinning if left in the state of nature than as created in a state of grace; though, even thus, as he points out sadly, Man fell.³ The weakness of Man under temptation once demonstrated, it was, however, neither in the counsels of divine wisdom to put him back in his first state of innocency nor "without any manner (of) pain taken or anything done towards the deserving thereof" to put him forward and in possession of eternal wealth. For, as More explains, the unconditioned bliss of heaven is proper to the Creator, but to no creature, man or angel, and bliss in general is not a thing to thrust upon any who would set no store by it.⁴

In such considerations, then, is to be sought the *rationale* of Redemption, aiming as it did, neither at replacing Man in Paradise nor at raising man immediately to heaven, but at restoring his nature to its first integrity. The Passion of Christ is, of course, vital to this conception of the course of history; and the historical prolegomena of the Treatise consequently at this point make way for a series of meditations upon the Passion and the Eucharist, composed, some part in

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1285.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1285.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1285.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1289.

English and some in Latin; this latter portion being subsequently rendered into More's English manner by his grandchild, Mary Basset, a woman of the privy chamber of Queen Mary. For his own labours had been brought to a very abrupt and, from the mystical standpoint, very striking conclusion, by the forcible withdrawal of his writing materials, precisely as he reached the close of the scene at Gethsemane. Through the charmed enclave of spiritual vineyards and oliveyards, however, which his reflections on the Last Supper and the Agony in the Garden create, the reader must be left to wander at his will alone. To put one's shoes from off one's feet does not always fall within the power of the historian, and, even if he could, his feet might still need a Maundy washing.

The charities of More's mind come, however, well within the work of portraiture, and the simile just used seems as if made to recall to memory the little vignette that More, as he meditated upon Christ's action in washing the feet of His disciples, found himself making of Henry. "None, I suppose, nowhere," he writes, "(use that godly ceremony) more goodly than our Sovereign lord, the King's Grace here of this realm, both in humble manner washing and wiping, and kissing also, many poor folks feet after the number of the years of his age . . ."¹

With even deeper courtesy he touches on the vexed questions of the fate of infants who die unbaptised and of men of good-will who yet die pagans. Though in that hard age he commits himself to no definite conclusion, it is clear enough that he inclines to the opinion, now so generally maintained, that the former, whilst they do not attain to the vision of God, suffer no "sensible" distress, but only "pain of loss"—the loss of the unattainable—and that the latter are brought within the compass of salvation by virtue of natural reason issuing in a belief in God as the rewarder of such as seek him.

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1319.

THE TOWER

For, as regards these latter, there have been, he remarks, holy doctors, who thought that "God of His merciful goodness by one mean or other failed not to give . . . them the faith, as He . . . will fail no man in thing necessary without the man's own fault."¹ It is a last kindly word from one far more conscious than people in general are to-day of the incongruity of supposing that celestial happiness can be forced upon materially-minded men by some arbitrary decree.

¹ Engl. Works, II, p. 1282.

TOWER HILL

WHILST in the obscurity of a cell, where, after books and paper had been taken from him, he kept the windows deliberately darkened¹ so as to strengthen his vision of worlds half-realised, More meditated upon the pain of this world and the Passion of Christ, events in the great world around moved forward to a climax. The emblematic roses, white and red, seemed to be budding again in that summer of 1534, and a poet might have seen their ensigns as well in Katharine's rising shroud and Mary's pallid fortunes as in Anne's hectic efforts to hold her place or the little Elizabeth's coming love of pomp and colour. White and red, the parties struggled, like plants contending for light and soil, the Legitimists with their roots deep in the old Europe of collective Christianity and the old England of Flemish sympathies, and the Nationalists tied to the notion of the self-sufficient, totalitarian state yet leaning a little towards whatever Continental quarter promised sunshine. There were men in England at that time, and powerful men too, ready to see Mary Tudor oust her father from his throne with foreign aid as her namesake, the second Mary Stuart, actually did at a later date with Dutch assistance; and there is room for conjecture that, if Charles V had given even a modicum of foreign aid, England might have risen in revolt against Henry. Certainly the only defence for the laws passed by Parliament in 1534 has to be sought, as Froude saw clearly,² in the extreme peril of the Government. Henry, it is true, at

¹ Cresacre More, "Life of Sir Thomas More," p. 253.

² "History of England," Vol. II, c. 9.

the close carried all before him. But in the autumn of 1534 many chances, long since forgotten, seemed to offer, with Anne already fighting an uphill game to retain the King's wayward affections against an unknown rival, who was in fact kept at bay only by the ignominious expedient of interposing the counteracting charms of Anne's cousin, Margaret Shelton; with Cromwell holding to Anne only because he feared Norfolk and the Catholics more; with a new Pope of more favourable dispositions than the last installed at Rome; with Francis of France playing fast and loose, now with Henry and now with Charles; with Henry himself already reaching out greedy hands to grasp the religious houses;¹ and with the Friars already rebelliously moving.²

More appears but as a knight on the chess-board if we figure the size and complexity of this game, but nevertheless as a piece in a key-position. He had, as regards the politics of the moment, instinctively adopted that middle line towards which Humanism so generally points. From the Red and the White rose-bushes alike he might perhaps be said to have possessed himself of the finest flowers—on the one hand by consenting to recognise a parliamentary title to the throne, and on the other by declining to acknowledge any royal supremacy over the Church. But, if the even tenour of his judgment enabled him thus to cull both kind of blossoms, it gave him no immunity from thorns. Conceal the reasons for it as he might, his general attitude conveyed a criticism all too plainly of the King's proceedings. And, though he was neither champion nor, as perhaps Fisher might be called, associate of the White Rose party, that party had as much cause to be glad of his presence as Henry and Cromwell to wish him gone.

¹ "L. & P.", 235.

² See the interesting account in Dodds & Dodds, "The Pilgrimage of Grace," I, c. 4.

At some date not exactly specified, but evidently during the earlier months of his imprisonment, More had received through Margaret Roper an ominous message from Cromwell to remember that Parliament was not yet dissolved. Cryptic in form, the meaning was clear. If more legislation were needed to drive More from his position, Parliament was to pass it. A remark of his which reached the Secretary gave perhaps some additional impetus to legislative activity.¹ The ex-Lord Chancellor had observed to his daughter that he was unjustly imprisoned, no such oath as had been tendered to him being in fact authorised by the Act of Succession. The defect, if defect there was, was specifically remedied by a parliamentary resolution on November 3rd, and in the same month this "Long Parliament"² of the Reformation passed the famous Act requiring Englishmen to see in their Sovereign and his successors on the throne the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, and investing them accordingly with authority to correct "all errors, heresies, abuses and enormities which by any manner of spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may be lawfully reformed . . . any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription or any other thing . . . notwithstanding."³

The transfer of power from the Pope to the King could hardly have been made in more explicit terms. A visible Church was postulated, but no reservation, such as Convocation had introduced and Margaret Roper had apparently been permitted to avail herself of in taking the Oath to the Succession, was retained. The King was supreme, not "so far as the law of Christ would allow," but without any effective limitation. An official memorandum,⁴ indeed, explained that

¹ Cresacre More, p. 245.

² 1529-1536.

³ 26 Hen. VIII, Cap. i.

⁴ Printed in Froude's "History of England," II (Libr. ed.), p. 346, footnote.

Henry was claiming nothing new, but only such authority as to a King belonged by virtue of the law of God; and this, if it had really meant what an English Chief-Justice had earlier expressed by saying that "a temporal act without the assent of the Supreme Head (viz. the Pope) cannot make the King a parson,"¹ might have passed muster. But as, on the strength of the Psalmist's exhortation to rulers to be wise and to judges to be learned, Henry had taken authority, with the assent of his councillors and such clergy as he credited with impartiality,² to set aside any opinion, law or decree proceeding from doctors of the Church or clergy in favour of any Apostolic Head to the Universal Church, the Act would appear in practice to have created a position in which the Sovereign could do or teach pretty much what he pleased. However that may be, it certainly took the shortest way imaginable with objections such as those arising out of Irenæus's second-century requirement that every local Church must (even on the most restrained rendering of the passage³) be in communion with⁴ the Church of Rome, so as to keep its faith intact. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* was to be judge in its own case, and Henry master in his or in its house, whichever way we prefer to put it.

An auxiliary Act declaring the denial of the King's new title to be treason made it clear that the Government now wished the issue between King and Pope to be fully joined. In such a denial "there might," as Froude observes, "be no intention of treason; the motive of the opposition might be purely religious; but from the nature of the case opposition of any kind would abet the treason of others; and no honesty of meaning could render possible any longer a double loyalty to the Crown and to the Papacy."⁵ Thus at any rate the King

¹ Quoted in Pickthorn, "Early Tudor Government," I, p. 182.

² The actual word used is "indifferent," but we should say "impartial."

³ Adv. Haer., III, iii, 2.

⁴ Convenire ad.

⁵ Froude, "History of England," II, c. 9.

and his councillors interpreted the new Act, although the House of Commons, with somewhat fatuous care, inserted the word "maliciously," in the hope of saving from the appalling penalties of treason those who without malicious intent refused the King his new title of Supreme Head of the Church. They might have known, from the fate of the "*quantum per Christi legem licet*" clause how idle such precautions were. For better or worse Cæsar had resolved in future to take charge, not of his own things only, but of those appertaining to God; and he would stick at nothing to achieve his purpose.

By the time Henry's final hesitations were over and all this legislation was complete, autumn had turned to winter and, according to our present reckoning, the year 1534 passed into 1535. Anne recovered her power over Cromwell in February, and to that extent over the King. In March, however, Cromwell fell seriously ill, and for a moment there seemed some slight chance of a reaction. But by April he had recovered; and his policy marched again mercilessly forward. The Bishops—Fisher, of course, excepted—had formally abjured the Pope in January; and a proclamation in April made it highly penal to mention the Pope's name in the liturgy. To any failure to conform to the royal edict the tender of the new Oath of Supremacy afforded an obvious rejoinder.

Most Englishmen drifted, as it is likely we should many of us drift again, if any similar situation can be imagined. But it was not so with them all; and it was not so with More's old friends at the London Charterhouse. The Carthusians saw what was coming; and Houghton, a man of small stature but great charm, dignity and distinction, had for some while been preparing his associates as well as himself for their ordeal. His touching address to the doomed community, his willingness to sacrifice himself, if that would serve, like a shepherd for his sheep, his humble request to be forgiven by each mem-

ber of the house in turn for any wrong he might have done them, his magnificent, magnetic resolution to resist, not less than the response which it elicited, have, in fact, moved the most adverse of critics¹ to acknowledge the signal beauty of the Catholic defence and pay it the pagan compliment of comparison with the spectacle of those three hundred at Thermopylæ who in the light of a Grecian morning sat combing their golden hair before they fell in battle. Certainly there is nothing in the conduct of Houghton and the most part of his associates out of line with the Carthusian romance as it has appeared in these pages; nor is it easy to imagine a more dramatic consummation to the Prior's address than the subsequent celebration of the Mass of the Holy Ghost, when the air seemed to the worshippers to fill with sound, and it was as if God had again descended from on high and made His advent known with heavenly music to the ears of men. But the divine melodies, so sensibly experienced by some, so inwardly felt by others, passed with the mystical illumination; and the monks were left to make their way to exile or death in the light of common day.

It was a little after Easter that Houghton, thinking it wiser, apparently, to have the first word in the coming encounter, went with the heads of the affiliated houses of Axholme and Beauvale to Cromwell, and asked point-blank to be excused from submission to the new regulations. The Secretary answered the three Priors by sending them to the Tower. Then on April 26th, he summoned them, together with Father Reynolds of Sion, before a committee of the Privy Council and tendered them the Oath of Supremacy. They refused to take it and were committed for trial. But the Jury, putting their trust in the saving word "maliciously," would not convict. In vain were the Jurymen assured that malice in connection with the Oath of Supremacy had no meaning, that to refuse

¹ Froude.

was, in fact, malicious. They held to their point, until at last Cromwell bullied them out of it with threats and induced them to sacrifice future peace of mind to present safety.

The four monks were accordingly sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered. On the day following their condemnation—it was the last of April 1535—More himself was summoned before Cromwell at the Tower. Changing his gown, he followed the Lieutenant into the gallery, and marking both certain acquaintance and strangers as he passed, presently came to the room where Cromwell was sitting with the Crown lawyers, the Clerk of the Council, and a man soon to be known as a hammer of monks—Sir John Tregonwell. He was offered a seat, but declined it. Cromwell asked him if he had seen the new statutes, meaning, of course, those of Supremacy and Treason. He replied that he had, but not so as to give them much consideration. Had he read, Cromwell inquired, the one declaring the King to be Head of the Church. He answered in the affirmative. Cromwell told him the King wanted his opinion of it. He said he had hoped that the King, who had known his mind on this subject from the first, would not have asked him any such thing. He was the King's true faithful subject, and had no wish or intention to meddle in such matters. That answer, Cromwell told him, would not do. The King was merciful and pitiful, and would be glad to see him out of prison, but required his submission first. More repeated that he was resolved to meddle no more in worldly affairs, adding that he wished for the future to make the Passion of Christ and his own passing out of this world the exclusive subject of his thoughts. At that he was sent away for a little, whilst the lawyers consulted, but only to be presently recalled.

Upon his return to the room More was asked by Cromwell, after an exordium to the effect that perpetual imprisonment would not discharge him from the duty of allegiance,

whether he considered that the King had no right to exact such things as were contained in the Statute. He answered that he would not say the contrary. The King, Cromwell observed positively, would show himself no less gracious, where men conformed to his will, than resolute, where men were obstinate. More's attitude, the Secretary continued, was likely to stiffen the resistance of others. More answered that he expressed no opinions and gave no advice, and then, with a quaint touch of spirit, let the voice of freedom be heard, "I do nobody any harm, I say no harm, I think no harm, but wish everyone good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith I long not to live." It was clear that there was nothing to be got out of him; and Cromwell closed the interview by noting that he had taken no exception to the Statute of Supremacy, and inquiring whether he found fault with any other one. More, faultlessly discreet, answered that, if he did so, he would neither confess to it nor converse about it. Whether at that point for an instant Cromwell's cold nature felt the impact of the gracious personality before him we cannot be sure, but he dropped very gently¹ the assurance that no advantage should be taken of anything More had said. And, when later he tried to remember exactly what had passed, More did not feel certain that the Secretary had not vouchsafed that there was, in fact, no advantage to be taken.

The savage sentence upon the Carthusians had anyhow failed to move More from his purpose. It remained to try the effect of their execution. Even more than the customary rigour was used, "the men"—to use the precise words of a precise historian—"being ripped up in each other's presence, their arms torn off, and their hearts rubbed upon their mouths and faces."² Such, therefore, was the punishment to be ex-

¹ "Full gently" is More's word.

² Gairdner, "English Church in the Sixteenth Century," p. 157.

pected for refusing to him whose proudest name was Fountain of Justice his new statutory title of Supreme Head of the English Church; and neither More nor Fisher had any legal right to suppose that they would be exempted from it. The ex-Lord Chancellor had not been a peer; the Bishop was held to have lost his privilege of execution as such by the act of attainder passed against both him and his colleague in resistance in the previous autumn.

Such considerations were, however, far from being uppermost in More's mind, as, watching from his window, he saw the three Carthusian Priors and Dr. Reynolds pass out of the Tower on their way to the hideous scene at Tyburn. It was clear indeed to Margaret Roper that for the moment he half-wished himself of their company, for all that shrinking even from a little pain which he had told her that he found in his nature.¹ For they went, he declared, like bridegrooms to a wedding; and he read into the rare brightness of their looks the joy of spiritual athletes whose long training had not been lost, but had brought them at length assurance of victory. At the moment, in fact, the old Carthusian romance had resumed its full power over his spirit. He compared his lot with that of those about to die, saluting them in spirit and complaining that he had spent his own life most sinfully and been left still in this world of misery, whilst they passed on into eternal habitations.

Little had the man of this world only guessed the reactions of that scene upon the man so nearly now of the other. For "within a while" after the monks had passed, to More there came Cromwell, affecting much friendship, telling him the King was good and gracious, declaring he had no cause for scruple, calculating that, in face of the fate of the Carthusians, it needed but a way made easy to make him swear. But the monks from their gibbets beckoned more powerfully than

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1450.

the King from his throne; and all Cromwell's cajolery did not so much as make More swerve from the road along which they had led him, so that the Secretary returned from his visit empty. Making, then, after the example of Socrates, in whose character and conflict and destiny some¹ have found a likeness to his own, a little music as the shadows lengthened, More composed a short ode, or, as Rastell calls it, "ballette," to "eye-flattering Fortune," which may be seen in his English Works. It contains little else than the old warning not to trust the fickle goddess and after calm to expect a storm, but it is apt enough. For storm was well upon its way.

On June 3rd, More was brought again before a commission of councillors consisting of Cranmer, Audley, Suffolk, Cromwell and, perhaps most ominous of all, Anne Boleyn's father, Wiltshire. The Secretary reported the King's dissatisfaction with the reply that he had taken to him. More, His Highness had declared, had an obstinate and evil mind, and must now give him a plain and final answer. He was to have the choice of confessing either the royal supremacy or his own malignity.

More denied his malignity, and deplored the King's supposing him capable of any such thing. Truth, he said, would prevail some day. Meanwhile his conscience was clear; and he added that a man might lose his head and take no harm. It was the King himself who had taught him at his first coming into the public service that his first duty was to God and his next to his sovereign. He had acted accordingly. More he could not say. Audley and Cromwell pressed him hard, but he continued his fight, not indeed for freedom of speech, which he never claimed, but for freedom of conscience. His conception of this was later expressed to perfection by his great admirer, Swift. "Liberty of conscience,

¹ So Prof. Chambers, pp. 398-400; J. A. K. Thomson, "Erasmus in England," p. 79.

properly speaking," wrote the Dean, "is no more than liberty of possessing our own thoughts and opinions, which every man enjoys without fear of the magistrate. But how far he shall publicly act in pursuance of those opinions is to be regulated by the laws of the country."¹

The distinction thus drawn, was too subtle for the convenience of More's examiners; and Cromwell, seeing the opportunity of an *argumentum ad hominem*, faced him with the question which many would still put to him to-day. Had he not, as Chancellor, examined "heretics, thieves, and other malefactors"—Cromwell significantly classes them all together—or, if he had not actually examined heretics himself, then at least countenanced their examination by the Bishops? And, if it was once fair to compel a man to say whether or not he thought the Pope head of the Church, why was it not equally so now in respect of the King? More said he had no intention either of contesting the point or defending himself, but that nevertheless a difference existed. In the time of his Chancellorship the Pope's power had been recognised "for an undoubted thing," throughout the whole body of Christendom, not simply, as now with the King's supremacy, as "a thing agreed in this realm," whilst the contrary was taken for truth elsewhere. Cromwell either did not take, or did not choose to take More's point. With crude realism he observed that men were burnt for denying the papal and beheaded for denying the royal supremacy, and that a precise answer was therefore equally necessary in both cases. More put his point again; and there followed an argument "over long," as he says, "to rehearse." At the last the Commissioners addressed two questions to him: the one whether he had seen the Statute, the other whether he believed it lawful. He answered the former in the affirmative, refused to answer the second, and refused to swear the oath. Upon that they sent him away,

¹ Swift, "Thoughts on Religion" (Temple Scott edition), III, p. 309.

Cromwell saying plainly and ominously that he liked him much less than before and pitied him no longer.

Doubtless! The method of interrogatories before trial formed no part of the common law any more than did torture; and Henry's Government was about to develop them both into co-ordinated engines of tyranny. Nor was there any constitutional means of resisting this encroachment upon the freedom of the subject except passivity and protest.¹ More was fighting a good fight for liberty—not as we have seen for such a liberty as a stable society can afford to give its citizens of speaking out all their opinions, but for the liberty of keeping one's thoughts to oneself. And with this was bound up a great tolerance. "I meddle not," he says, in words for which Thomas Cromwell had no use, but which Oliver Cromwell, in speech if not always in practice, made his own, "with the conscience of them that think otherwise." And here is to be found a vital difference between him and those heretics—and there were in those days many—who thought it a duty, or perhaps felt it a pleasure to speak out their mind. Emancipated from his great office as Chancellor, More could write to his daughter both in humility and pride that he was no man's judge. His soul, naturally Christian, showed him, what the admirable poise of his mind confirmed that, though men's tongues might have to be restrained, their thoughts should go free under God.

"A man," says the Scale of Perfection,² "shall not come to ghostly light in contemplation of Christ's godhead, unless he first come in imagination by bitterness and by compassion and by steadfast thinking of His manhood." With a fullness of experience beyond imagination More now attained this great height of vision. As we have seen, he had long been moving in circumstance towards the hill of Calvary and in

¹ See on this Pickthorn, "Early Tudor Government: Henry VIII," p. 361.

² Bk. I, c. 35.

thought amidst the olives of Gethsemane, and, whilst those as much accustomed to postulate chance in spiritual as law in physical phenomena will find nothing in what follows beyond the range of their formulas, devout and possibly deeper intelligences may perceive analogies that give them pause.

It was on a day shortly after he had been interrogated by Audley and Cromwell that More received a visit from Sir Richard Rich, who, a year or so before, had become Solicitor-General. This attention could have been no great pleasure to any one, for the man smelt so horribly that the Lieutenant of the Tower declared him to be almost unendurable,¹ but to the prisoner it must have been psychically as well as physically offensive. For More, though acquainted with Rich both as a boy and as a neighbour in Chelsea, had long objected to his dissolute habits and given him no countenance. Rich, however, feigned friendship. It was, so he subsequently said, from a charitable motive that he went to see his old acquaintance in prison, and, if that was so, he would appear to have combined charity with business. A similar interview with Fisher a little before had, in fact, provided valuable material for the prelate's condemnation, for upon assurances of secrecy and of immunity from unpleasant consequences—the King alone being made a party to what passed—the Bishop had admitted that he did not believe the Sovereign to be the Supreme Head of the Church of England. On the present occasion this too affectionate friend was accompanied by Southwell and Palmer, who, whilst Rich engaged More in seemingly good-natured talk, occupied themselves with packing up the prisoner's books in a sack for removal. As one speaking to a man both wise and learned, Rich ingenuously asked whether, if an act of parliament were to make him king, More would acknowledge him as such? More replied in the affirmative for he was by conviction a con-

¹ Cresacre More, p. 253.

stitutional monarchist. And if, continued Rich, an act of parliament required all the kingdom to take him for Pope, would More concur? In vain, however, was the net spread in the sight of so old a bird. More dodged it with a query. If Parliament made a law that God should not be God, he inquired, would Rich concur? The Solicitor-General returned a negative. Such a thing, he said, was outside the competence of Parliament. So much appears to have passed between them; and there, for those who trust More's recollection, the conversation stopped. But afterwards Rich remembered the prisoner as actually saying—what doubtless was the inference to be drawn from his dexterous interrogatory—that Parliament could no more make the King Supreme Head of the Church than it could make God no God; and this the Solicitor-General reported to the King. The monarch, all other means failing him to procure More's conviction, had, knowingly or unknowingly, turned at last to false witness; for Rich's evidence, backed at need, as the Solicitor-General doubtless assumed that it would be, by Southwell's and Palmer's testimonies, lay now at his disposal and seemed to furnish all that was required.

On July 1st, which chanced that year to fall upon a Thursday, More was brought to Westminster from the Tower. He came, apparently, on foot,¹ leaning upon a staff and evoking sympathy in the onlookers by his enfeebled steps. Of his thoughts we know nothing precisely, but, if the adjacent river possessed for his mind anything of the familiar symbolism of a barrier between this world and another, his super-sensual ear should have heard the voice of trumpets already sounding upon the other side. The Carthusians, at all events, were leading him still, for a new batch of martyrs had just been slain. Middlemore, Exmewe and Sebastian Newdigate—the last sometime a courtier and the King's

¹ The authority here is Stapleton. Campbell, with the aid, I fancy, of Pole's language in the "Pro Eccles. Unit. Def.", has amplified his words into a striking scene.

friend—after a full fortnight's standing upright in prison, fast bound about the neck and feet in irons and without so much as a minute's release for decency's demands, had completed at Tyburn sufferings perhaps unequalled in English history. Fisher, more mercifully used, had lost on Tower Hill the head which the Pope had hoped to save by the cover of a red hat. All these seemed to beckon More on, and with them those earlier bridegrooms of the spiritual marriage whose demeanour he had pointed out to Meg.

More passed into the Hall where he had so often sat in judgment. A special commission of fifteen, largely legal in character, but with the Boleyns, father and son,¹ also amongst its members, sat ready to try him; and he stood leaning upon his staff before them, whilst the articles of accusation were read. The Commissioners, by the mouths of Audley and Norfolk, once more offered him pardon, if he would correct his obstinate opinions. He thanked them for their good-will, but audibly added a prayer that God might keep him faithful to his considered convictions even unto death. Infirm as he was and worn by long imprisonment, he had, he said, neither words nor memory nor judgment sufficient to reply to so lengthy an accusation. They gave him a chair by way of answer; and he addressed himself as best he could to the specific charges.

These were really three, malicious opposition to the King's second marriage being, however, also alleged. But for this last offence, though in point of fact, as he said himself in the conclusion of the trial, it formed the primary motive for seeking his blood, he had already been condemned to perpetual imprisonment and to a loss of property, so complete that his unfortunate wife was, as she wrote to Cromwell, now in extreme necessity and selling her clothes.² The main charge in the indictment was thus his denial of the royal

¹ Wiltshire and Rochford.

² Letter printed by Cresacre More, Appendix VIII.

supremacy; and he was alleged to have incurred the penalties of the new Act. He disputed, however, its application. Statutory penalties, he said, are intended to punish men for words and deeds; but he had kept silence. As he had told Cromwell and the Council, he was dead to the world, and desired to occupy his mind, not with reflections upon the King's supremacy, but upon Christ's Passion. Here the King's Proctor interposed to say that his silence was proof of malice. At this the old lawyer in him, slumbering behind the saint, awoke; and he rejoined that according to the maxim of the Common Law silence seemed to give consent. But, however that might be, a good subject was more strictly bound to follow conscience than to return replies, and in refusing to answer there was no wrong-doing, provided no scandal or sedition were caused. He passed on to the second count of the indictment. It was said that he had written letters to Fisher advising disobedience to the Statute of Supremacy. These letters the Bishop had burnt;¹ he only wished the Commissioners could have seen them. They had contained no more than an exchange of intimacies between old friends, and an injunction to Fisher to inform his own conscience about the Statute. Finally, collusion between the Bishop and himself was charged against him. Both alike had, it appeared, compared the Statute to a two-edged sword, since he who approved the royal supremacy lost his soul and he who refused it his body. But the similarity of their observations was due to the similarity of their outlook.

A petty jury was sworn when² More had finished; and the indictment was handed to them. It was then that, in

¹ They were, in fact, burnt not by the Bishop, but by George Golde, the Constable's servant.

² Campbell ("Lives of the Lord Chancellors") goes so far as to depict the jury as being about to acquit More after his speech and the Judges as being all dismayed. Mr. Egerton Beck (Dublin Review, July 1935), on the other hand is critical of some details of the Trial that have been generally accepted.

Campbell's words, Rich, "to his eternal disgrace and to the eternal disgrace of the Court who permitted such an outrage on decency, left the bar and presented himself as a witness for the Crown." What he had to say we know already, as we know also what More thought of him. The victim, after the perjury was accomplished, observed that he was sorrier for Rich's bad faith than for his own peril. He went on to point out that the Solicitor-General's statement was discredited, not only by the character of the witness himself, but by the intrinsic improbability of the words alleged to have been spoken. Was it likely, he asked, that he would have revealed in casual conversation to Rich what he had refused to communicate time after time to councillors especially appointed by the King to inquire? But even had he done this, there would have been no malicious offence. Malice signified malevolence—not sin, for all men had sinned—and had the same value in the Statute of Supremacy as "forcible" in the Statute of Forcible Entry. A private and familiar conversation could no more be malicious than a peaceful entry could be a forcible one. And twenty years and more of loyal service, royally recognised in the offices that he had held, should be sufficient to protect him from any supposition of malice against his Sovereign.

Confronted by so formidable a panoply of simple truth and honest thought, Rich called on Southwell and Palmer to corroborate his evidence. Palmer was called first, but even this henchman of Cromwell shrank from a lie that must have made More's conviction certain. Though it is not unlikely that he had done what many of us would probably have done in the same circumstances and listened in the Tower with all his ears, he declared that he had been too busy to hear the talk. And Southwell said the same. Then More spoke again in confutation of Rich's evidence. The Jury, however, knew their job and, after a quarter of an hour's absence, reported him guilty. Thereupon Audley, anxious perhaps to get a

bad business quickly over, began to pass sentence. But More stopped him, and with all the authority of an older occupant of his great office, observed: "My Lord, when I was toward the Law, the manner in such was to ask the prisoner why judgment should not be given against him." Audley paused, asking what objection More wished to raise. All the wisdom of this world now counselled silence, for to exacerbate the King might be to imperil whatever chance the prisoner had of seeing his sentence commuted from the penalties of Tyburn to those of Tower Hill. More's mind, however, did not work that way. There was a time to be silent and a time to speak, and, since the liberty of silence for which he and a Greater than he had alike contended before their judges was now lost and his condemnation, as he said, assured, it had become with him a duty to speak out his mind plainly. The indictment, he said boldly, depended upon a statute repugnant to the laws of God and of the Church. No temporal prince might presume to challenge that spiritual pre-eminence of the See of Rome which had been conferred by Christ upon St. Peter and St. Peter's successors. No local law could bind against the Law Catholic any more than the municipal legislation of the City of London could bind against an act of Parliament. This was the more clear that our own national laws, still unrepealed, proclaimed it. We had only to look at Magna Carta to see the inviolate freedom and constitutional right of the English Church proclaimed, or at the Coronation Oath, wherein the King, like all other Christian princes, had sworn obedience to the Papacy, to see the connection between England and Rome, ancient as St. Gregory and St. Augustine, recognised as a relationship of child and parent.

It was at this point that the Lord Chancellor interrupted to ask whether More thought himself wiser and better than all the Episcopate and Nobility of the Kingdom. Here was the

old insinuation that the Abbot of Westminster had made against him at Lambeth; and he met it with a rare modesty and confidence. He said that, had he indeed stood alone, he should have feared to trust his judgment, but added that, if numbers were so important as Audley seemed to suggest, he had little cause to change his mind. Then, rising to the fullness of his argument, he continued: "My Lord, for one bishop of your opinion I have a hundred saints of mine; and for one parliament of yours—and God knows of what kind—I have all the General Councils for a thousand years; and for one kingdom I have France and all the Kingdoms of Christendom."¹ He had appealed from the new England to the old, from bishops clothed with a little brief authority to saints made venerable by time, from Convocation and Parliament to the canons and councils of the Church, from the King's tribunal to Clio's serener court, from an impulsive and insular decision to the catholic sense of Europe.

Few, perhaps, who feel any sympathy with Audley's collective premise will not feel also the force of More's rejoinder. But, however that may be, some special interest attaches to the fact that this opinion of the first lawyer and the first layman in the land was given in the very year when, according to some recent calculations, the English Reformation movement first displayed the mark of schism. It is never easy to say precisely in such cases when the change occurs, any more than, as Burke has said in some similar connection, it is easy to know when day passes into night. But of the change itself there can be no doubt; and Dr. Messenger² may be correct in dating it rather from the anti-papal commitments of the English Bishops in the spring of 1535 than from the Act of Supremacy in 1534. If that be so, More's opinion long deliberated, carefully weighed and reluctantly delivered,

¹ "Letters and Papers, 1535," No. 996, p. 395.

² "The Reformation, the Mass and the Priesthood," pp. 239, 240.

falls so exactly at the point of severance between England and Rome that we may like to see in it a conjunction of the hour and the man.

Something, indeed, that weighed with More in his decision remains uncertain and perhaps unknown; something that Henry had said to him about the Papacy when, long before in 1521, they discussed the basis of the papal claims; "a secret cause" why papal authority should not be diminished in England; something of which he speaks plainly in a letter of 1533 to Cromwell,¹ to which he alludes in a conversation of 1534 with Margaret Roper,² and finally at which he seems to hint in his letter of the same year to Dr. Wilson³ (with whom he had debated the matter of the King's marriage more fully than with any other⁴) in order courteously to differentiate and excuse his own resolution never to yield from Wilson's irresolution and default. Here lies hid to all appearance some more intimate communication than the King's strange statement to him, which he made public when he was summoned before the Royal Commission in the affair of the Nun of Kent, that the English Crown was held of the Pope.⁵ Did the King reveal his liaison with Anne's sister, Mary, canonical obstacle as it was to his second marriage, or did Henry speak of something now through More's discretion, altogether lost to history? We cannot say. But to return to the trial!

Norfolk brought the argument back from the broad issue to the point of law. Here was malice, he said; here was proof of a malicious bent. "Nay! nay!" More answered with the old rectitude of diction against which he maintains Tyndale was offending by his misuse of "no." "Very and pure necessity for the discharge of conscience!" . . . And he

¹ Engl. Works, p. 1427.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1445.

⁵ "Roper" (ed. Sampson), p. 240.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1440.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1444.

appealed to Him who knew the secrets of all hearts for his justification.

Audley was perhaps a little moved, and perhaps not a little eager to shift or distribute responsibility. He turned to Fitzjames, the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and asked for his opinion. "Who," as, Harpsfield puts it, "like a wise man answered: 'My Lords all, by St. Julian (that was ever his oath!) I must needs confess that, if the Act of Parliament be lawful, then the Indictment is good enough.'"¹ Upon which Audley actually, according to Campbell, calling out in Latin, "What need we any further witness? he is guilty of death," and at any rate calling upon his colleagues to note what Fitzjames had said, gave judgment against More, thus in the opinion of the same high legal authority authorising the commission of "the blackest crime that ever has been perpetrated in England under the forms of law."²

The hideous sentence given, the Commissioners, offering to give him a favourable hearing, asked More once again if he had anything to say in his defence. He answered that he had but this—that, as St. Paul and St. Stephen whom St. Paul persecuted, were now friends in Paradise, so he hoped that he and his judges, though differing in this world, might hereafter merrily meet in heaven. And with that, an axe borne in front and the axe-edge turned towards him, he was led out by Sir William Kingston, the tall, comely Constable of the Tower and his very dear friend.

Kingston, overcome with emotion, parted from him at the Old Swan pier by London Bridge. But at the Tower-Wharf Meg met him and, pushing past the guard, hung about his neck, and kissed him, and cried, "Oh! my father! Oh! my father," for no other words would come. He comforted her as well as he could, speaking of the will of

¹ Harpsfield, p. 197.

² Campbell, "Lives of the Lord Chancellors: Sir Thomas More."

God, and she let him go at last. But then, turning once more, she ran back and kissed him again and again. At this his own composure broke, and that, too, of the most part of the onlookers. One or more of his family and household followed with her to say farewell, kissing him likewise. "It was homely," observes Cresacre, "but very lovingly done." "All these," he adds, "and also his son, my grandfather, witnessed, that they smelt a most odoriferous smell to come from him according to that of Isaac: *odor filii mei, sicut odor agri pleni cui benedixit Dominus.*"¹

More's sentence was commuted from the gibbet to the block; and he is said to have greeted the news with the cryptic petition that God might not permit the King again to show such mercy to any of his friends. The words were, as is generally thought, said in mild irony, but perhaps expressed a last, oblique regret that, as in life so in death, he was to come short of the full tribulation demanded by the Carthusian romance. The King's benevolence, however, such as it was, was not yet exhausted; and there came a final gesture from the Court in the shape of a fool of a courtier who bored More stiff with importunities to change his mind. At last, to get rid of this water-fly, More remarked that he had changed it. The fellow, supposing himself to have succeeded where so many had failed, went off without further inquiry and informed the King, who sent him back for fuller particulars. But More had only been answering a fool according to his folly, and, blaming the man for a tattler who could not recognise a joke, declared that the change he had in view was, not, after all, to let his beard be shaven, but to oblige it to take part with his head at his execution. This conceit continued to amuse him and, according to a tradition which Bacon² has preserved, he declared on the morning of his

¹ The smell of my son is as the smell of a fertile field which the Lord has blessed.

² Spedding, VII, p. 127.

execution that he would not impair its value¹ whilst the King's suit for his head was still pending. And so, with "the great gray beard" of which Hall speaks in his chronicle, he went to his death. But reflecting at the last moment, as all the world has heard, upon its uncontested innocence of crime, he was at some pains to free the poor thing from its perilous proximity to his neck by bidding the executioner defer the fatal blow until he had put it out of danger.

With such mild joking More rendered what is owing to gaiety in the last days that were left him. His graver thoughts are reflected in the composition of certain prayers to God still used in Catholic devotion, and of loving letters to Meg and to Bonvisi, that wealthy merchant from Lucca who had been forty years his friend. To his daughter he returned his hair-shirt and discipline, their austere mission now fully performed; and from Bonvisi, as if in symbolic exchange, came the present of a silk camlet gown to be worn at his execution. For the men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were apt to be aware that the world is a costume-piece, and that each man's part deserves to be played out in full dress to the end. The Lieutenant of the Tower, however, grudged the executioner so fine a perquisite as Bonvisi had provided and, after much characteristic resistance from his charge on the executioner's account, persuaded More to wear instead a gown of frieze, compensation being afforded to the headsman in the shape of a golden angel.

The sixth of July is the Octave of the Feast of St. Peter, and on the same day was celebrated the translation of St. Thomas of Canterbury's relics. There was here to be found a conjunction between memorials of the Petrine tradition and its first great English defender; and it is significant of what More felt he was dying for that he wrote to Meg on the fifth of

¹ So I understand "do no cost upon." But it may, I suppose, mean "incur no expense in connection with."

July to say that in view of this conjunction he longed on the morrow to go to God. And the thing happened as he had desired. Early on the 6th, Sir Thomas Pope, a friend belonging to the Court of Chancery, came to him with the news that he was to suffer that morning before nine o'clock, adding that the King wished that his words on the scaffold should be few. He signified his satisfaction at the first part of this communication and his obedience to the second, although he had intended to speak at greater length. One request he had to make—that his daughter might be present at his burial. That, Pope told him, was already allowed, and the permission extended to his family and friends.

A singular omission, though one that his biographers have in common, leaves us in doubt whether More received those sacraments which a violent death left open to him. Perhaps there was no difficulty; or perhaps, as in Fisher's case,¹ the King, desiring to add to his discomforts, sent him some confessor of Lutheran dispositions. All we know, and perhaps all we need to know, is that, as he came forth from the Tower, he was carrying a red cross in his hand and had his eyes raised towards heaven. His face, as Margaret Clements reported, looked wan and thin, his beard was unkempt, his gown poor. A cup of wine, according to a custom not uncommon, was offered him by a woman whose house gave on the route, but he refused it with the excuse that such drink was not for one to whose Master had been offered vinegar and gall. There were ugly looks to be seen among the crowd. One woman bade him give her back some documents that she alleged him to have lost; and another charged him with injustice. These he could not hope to satisfy; and to the second he said frankly that he remembered her case and stood by his decision. Not all his road, however, was thus made rough! There came a man from Winchester whom he had

¹ "Spanish State Papers," V, i, p. 504.

once rescued from despair by his prayers and counsels, and who, in face of fresh temptation, besought him once again for aid; and to this poor creature, now fearful of committing suicide, he promised his thoughtful intercessions. And the man went away and was troubled no more.

The scaffold, when More reached it, looked so jerry-built that it furnished him with a gibe and a joke for the Lieutenant: "I pray you, Sir, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself." Safely lodged upon the platform, he began to speak a little to the people, until the sheriff intervened and stopped him. At that he concluded forthwith, and in words which were indeed the proper conclusion of the whole matter added: "I call you to witness, brothers, that I die the faithful servant of God and the King, and in the faith of the Catholic Church." So Margaret Clements remembered the speech, but the careful writer of the "Paris News-letter" gives to the words an even stronger emphasis. "He then begged the bystanders earnestly to pray for the King, that it might please God to give him good counsel, protesting that he died the King's good servant, but God's first." Here was loyalty *in extremis*, yet still true, and a cry *de profundis*, yet still faithful. For the phrase was closely reminiscent of the charge which, some twenty years before, the young King had given to the speaker upon entering his service—to "look first unto God and after God unto him."¹ His address to the crowd concluded, More said the Miserere, and, having kissed the executioner, who, according to custom, had sought his pardon, bade the man strike home, bound his own eyes and placed his head upon the block. "And then," as a biographer has expressed it, so admirably that the phraseology can never be improved upon, "he found those

¹ English Works, p. 1444. Stapleton (Hallett's ed., p. 149) gives the King's injunction to the period of the King's matter. It may have been repeated.

words true which he had often spoken, that a man may lose his head and have no harm."¹

Even those whose minds entertain neither Christian certitude nor pagan hope, who find no scales falling from their eyes in hours of high emotion, and for whom the darkened glass through which the whole world peers lets in no ray of sunlight, will hardly fail to be conscious, as in imagination they turn away from the bleeding corpse upon the scaffold, of some serene, secret confidence, like that which a critic² has confessed to feeling when the curtain falls at the close of "King Lear," that, despite every appearance, all is yet ultimately well. So far, indeed, as the senses can tell us anything of the matter on such occasions, evil seems completely victorious, and good lies prone, and the good cause is lost. Yet still men manage somehow to make sure that the fact is otherwise, that Cordelia sleeps but to wake again, that in some world from which the stars look down right has triumphed, that sacrifice is not sublime nonsense but sublimated common sense.

Even here we have not as a rule long to wait to see wrong so far worsted that the Regans and Gonerils and Edmunds of the world pass swiftly to their several fates. And so it happened in More's tragedy. Henry fulfilled himself in multiplicity of wives; Anne, with, perhaps, the murder of Katharine as well as the death of More upon her conscience, paid within a year or so upon the scaffold the price of her fading charms and the failure to bring forth the man-child required of her. Cromwell, having served his Prince, but certainly not God either first or last, was executed with all the barbarity that a clumsy executioner can achieve. Cranmer, unstable in opinion and infirm of purpose, did not escape a fate which he no more hesitated than his opponents to inflict upon others.

¹ Stapleton.

² Bradley in his "Shakespearean Tragedy."

Rich—and if More's views about avarice are right, this was perhaps the most unkindest fate of all—was left, after at a later date some days of mortal terror, to live out a life of shame and treachery with his ill-gotten riches. Upon Audley alone did the avenging hand of time seem to press with no heavier weight than indifferent health can compass. Yet not all Audley's assiduous time-serving and calculated cynicism enabled him to reach the years of More; and he died at the age of fifty-five, younger by a little than his less circumspect predecessor.

As for the Bishops, good easy men, feeling as they did, no doubt, like poor old Warham, when Queen Katharine appealed to him to defend her marriage, that "the wrath of the Prince is death" (*ira principis mors est*), did not Gardiner speak for them all when the story of the Passion was read to him upon his death-bed and he interrupted with the remorseful exclamation "*Negavi cum Petro, exivi cum Petro, sed nondum flevi cum Petro*" ("I denied with Peter, I went out with Peter, but not yet have I wept with Peter")?

Thus, then, it fared with the dupes and the villains of this piece, and to the degree just indicated God would not appear to have been mocked. Wider and deeper considerations are, however, involved if the moral government of the world is brought under discussion. For Henry won hand over fist; and in the new England that arose, as a result of his rule, in the reign of his younger daughter his conception of the right relationship between Church and State was approximately realised. Some, like Froude, have found themselves able to see in him a great statesman, a great patriot and a great man. Others, not so fully satisfied of the excellence of his parts or character, have been content to regard his reign as a striking demonstration of the doctrine that good comes out of evil. And in fact the England that at long last emerged, after the wars of religion were over and the succession to the

throne settled in the House of Hanover, was in many ways so full of charm and interest that no one can feel surprised at this opinion. Yet, even when this new England of the Whigs had almost reached maturity in the reign of Victoria, Macaulay, whilst scouting as mere sensibility the criticism of the industrialised society of the time which Southey in his "Colloquies" had significantly put into the mouth of More, observes, with an indecision not often to be found in his writings, that it is "difficult to say whether England owed more to the Roman Catholic religion or to the Reformation."¹ And this national perplexity has not, perhaps, grown less as the wheel of opinion has come round under the hand of democracy and the humanising and integrating influences, which Macaulay selects as the patriotic contribution of Catholicism to the English polity, are preferred in importance to the particular conception of freedom entertained by a Whig aristocracy. Meanwhile the world without has narrowed, the need of a unit of sentiment transcending national feeling become more urgent, and the failure of Geneva, whether as a Calvinistic or a cosmopolitan force, to meet it more obvious. Judge the Papal supremacy from whatever side we may, and More will still seem justified in his view that the Royal Supremacy could do nothing to replace that visible catholic sodality of Christian men which the medieval world with all its imperfections yet possessed. Disintegration he hated, as we have seen, in all its forms and sources; and disintegration was gravely advanced by the lapse from Christian unity for the first time of an English King and the lead this gave to disintegrating influences in Europe.

Clear-sighted man of this world as he was, More had too keen a mind not to strip the Monarch of his humbug, the Episcopate of its opportunism, the Parliament of its compliance, and the new Laws of their good looks. But meek man of

¹ "History of England," I, c. i.

the other world as he was also, he loved his fellow-men none the less that he saw their weaknesses plainly and that his ways parted from theirs. Still when his judges had done their worst, he felt their mortal difference as a parting of friends with a merry meeting beyond it in heaven and did not allow himself to believe that his opponents understood what they were doing in withdrawing England from its old Catholic association in the community of Christendom. And most probably they did not understand, and took for no more than a passing political device what turned into an enduring cleavage.

Raised high above the heads of his fellow-men upon London Bridge as a sign to be spoken against, More's head may thus be made to seem such a symbol of superior foresight as no art could better. And it needs but a little power of dreaming vision for that bridge to grow into the great bridge of the Renaissance between the medieval and the modern world, and for the river running below to seem as the water of four centuries flowing from hills, where some Charterhouse lies hidden, beneath all the bridges of occasion and losing itself at last in marshland and shallows as it reaches the blue-grey, incalculable sea.

Such parables will, however, have meaning only for those who see with Professor Chambers that civilisation is lost unless More's principles prevail, or agree with Friedrich von Hügel¹ that we must breathe anew the high-air of the thirteenth century if the human spirit is to regain its full mastery of our mortal frame. For myself, content to wonder what might not have come to us in religious power and international solidarity, had the true Humanism prevailed, I am held

¹ This statement should, however, be balanced by a mention of von Hügel's judgment upon More, whom, in his "Mystical Element in Religion," I, p. 62, he places beside Cardinal Nicolas of Coes as combining "the fullest adhesion to, and life-long labour for External Institutional Authority, with the keenest intellectual, speculative life, and with the constant temper and practice of Experimental and Mystical Piety."

captive on the Renaissance Bridge where once he stood whom, since now our course is run, I may, perhaps, be allowed to call St. Thomas. There I seem to see him much as Erasmus did in retrospect four hundred years ago, with his perfect proportion of physical form, with those eyes that miss nothing of what passes here and yet seem looking always at something beyond, that voice so notably distinct in diction as to suggest a singular clarity of thought behind, and those hands a little coarser, so Erasmus noted, than his other members, as if resolute to retain the common touch whilst his feet were treading the palaces of kings. Despite a dress somewhat carelessly disposed like that of a scholar holding honours and decorations cheap, his "homespun"—to take up Mackintosh's word¹—is of rare quality and pure English make; and, for the rest, to get into talk with him is to recognise an integrity of being so perfect, a poise of body, mind and spirit so true, a hold so firm upon the four things that bring a man's soul to full development—God and Conscience, and Church and Country—that I can find no other Englishman, unless it be Falkland, who can be said to possess the same full measure of personality. But Falkland, for all the charm of mind and breadth of outlook so vividly displayed in Arnold's memorable essay, fails a little at the last, loses courage, grows morose, and, despairing of the State, flings away his life in desperation. St. Thomas only, with his "stout and cheerful heart," perseveres to the end, seeing things ever more steadily and whole, rendering to men more and more their due, wearing the saint's gay vesture with the martyr's crown.

In an England, then, which the lawyer with his love of ordered freedom has done more, perhaps, than all other sorts and conditions of men to make, none, it may well be, is fitter

¹ Mackintosh in Lardner's "Cabinet Cyclopaedia": "There is something homespun in More which is common to him with scarcely any other and which gives to all his faculties and qualities the appearance of being the native growth of the soil."

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than St. Thomas More to be proposed to his countrymen as an example of that basic, diaphanous type of which it has been said by a modern Humanist that "a majority of such would be the regeneration of the world."¹ For, just as in France St. Joan, by community of profession, may seem set to purge without offence the too-militant patriotism of her people, so he, by the association of a gracious humanism and fullness of spiritual life with the 'legal mind,' seems exceptionally qualified to rid his compatriots of anything arid, insular, prejudiced or censorious in their outlook and to raise their great love of justice to the plane of equity and of freedom until it attain the liberty of the sons of God.

¹ Pater, "Diaphaneité."

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

So full a discussion of sources is to be found in the prologue to Prof. R. W. Chambers's "Thomas More" and so exhaustive a list of authorities in Miss Routh's "Sir Thomas More and his Friends," pp. xix-xxii, that it would only be to multiply labour to no purpose if I were to attempt to add anything further of the kind either by way of prefix or suffix. The general reader may, however, like to be reminded that, if he wishes to see the general history of the time treated from an undenominational standpoint, he has in Mr. Herbert Fisher's "Political History of England 1485-1547" (if I may be allowed without impertinence to praise my own master and teacher in history) this very thing most admirably done; that if he desires an Anglican version of the same period, he will find it in James Gairdner's "English Church in the Sixteenth Century" and in the same learned student's "Lollardy and the Reformation"; and finally that, if his taste is Protestant, Froude's eloquent pages—never, be it added, however, in justice, so eloquent as when dealing with such Catholic aspects of his subject as the charm of the medieval world, the Last Mass at the Charterhouse, or the significance of a Catholic bishop with reference to Archbishop Parker's consecration—remain at his disposal. He may find it also a convenience to remember that the monographs on Thomas More fall roughly into two classes: the older ones—Roper's, Harpsfield's, Stapleton's, "Ro. Ba.'s" and Cresacre More's—anecdotal and edifying; the modern ones—Fr. Bridgett's, Prof. Chambers's, Miss Routh's, Mr. Hollis's, to speak of no others—analytical and erudite.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

There remains for the student of More one outstanding problem and also one outstanding possibility—the problem of the authorship of the “Ro. Ba.” life, which we must all wish Dr. Hitchcock the best success in solving, and the possibility that Judge Rastell’s biography of his uncle may yet be found. This lost life of More was—so Prof. Chambers considers us warranted in concluding from the fragments that have survived—an “amazing work” and very accurate, though far from dispassionate; and, whilst its discovery is unlikely to change the essential features of the story, it might well amplify our knowledge of the times in some interesting details. Even, however, as things are, there can be few English characters in the sixteenth century about whom we know as intimately much as we know about him, whom we knew so long as “Sir Thomas More,” but whom the British Museum catalogue, moving with the times as the student may find it convenient to remember, now numbers amongst the saints.

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